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ABSTRACT

Despite the widespread attention given to education reform, no substantial knowledge base has existed for identifying and implementing effective reforms for at-risk student populations. This document, the third of three volumes, describes the research design for a study that identified the essential mechanics of effective reforms for students at risk. The study also identified the incentives for and barriers to implementing and sustaining reforms and their effects on students. The case study of 18 school sites involved two-person trips to 12 schools in 1994 and one-person trips to 6 schools in 1995. The first 12 sites were grouped into 6 pairs, according to their distinctive reform characteristics: major urban reforms; low-budget, high-systemic-support efforts; high-community-achievement sites; public-private ventures; high school restructuring efforts; and work/learning combinations. Methods included archival analysis; a survey of school staff; three different focus groups with teachers, students, and parents; the shadowing of two students at each school; classroom and campus observations; and interviews with the principal, onsite program coordinator, district superintendent, funding representatives, program advocate, program developer, and other administrators. The report contains a summary of publications and proceedings from the 1992 National Conference on Educational Reforms and At-Risk Students. (LMI)

ED 397 543

Products

During the course of our work, we will develop products aimed at communicating findings and ideas. Our number one priority is to disseminate these products to a broad audience of practitioners, researchers, and parents, so we are planning to use a variety of communication channels. Among the forthcoming materials are the following:

- **Monograph summarizing current knowledge**—a review of what is known about the incentives and barriers to meaningful school reforms for at-risk and disadvantaged students
- **Edited volume of commissioned papers**—a collection of fourteen distinctive perspectives on the education-related problems of at-risk and disadvantaged youth and on the reform efforts that have been made to improve their chances for academic success
- **Conference transcripts and proceedings**—videotapes and written summaries of proceedings of the 1992 conference on at-risk and disadvantaged youth, to be held under AIR-CDS auspices in April 1992
- **Practical guides for administrators, teachers, and parents**—descriptions of successful strategies for raising academic standards, enhancing school climates, and preventing dropouts among at-risk and disadvantaged youth
- **Journal articles and special issues**—papers that build on the conceptual frameworks we develop in reviewing the literature and on our case studies, with reactions and critiques from commentators with a variety of perspectives
- **Research bulletins for policy audiences**—abstracts of important findings and conclusions from the literature and from our own field studies, with emphasis on the prospective results of current policy options

For More Information

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Educational Reforms for Students At Risk

Synthesis and evaluation of previous efforts to improve educational practice and development of strategies for achieving positive outcomes

Sponsored by:
U.S. Office of Educational Research and Improvement

Directed by:
American Institutes for Research,
with support from the
Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students at the Johns Hopkins University

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH

Purposes

Over the past several decades, significant amounts of money, effort, and thought have been devoted to developing better instructional programs for at-risk and disadvantaged students in the U.S. This study will bring together what has been learned during this time, analyze it critically, and expose it to review by researchers and practitioners. An active dialogue will take place and be informed by the following:

- An examination of innovative instructional methods and environments in schools with "real-world" problems, constraints, and possibilities
- Aggressive efforts to share strategies that work with practitioners and suggested policy refinements with state and federal decisionmakers

Beginning in October 1991, the work will continue through March 1995 and will involve the efforts of researchers, practitioners, and educational policymakers.

Major Activities

To accomplish this work, the American Institutes for Research and the Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students, as a team, are engaged in the following activities:

- **Advisors**—We have involved recognized experts in the field as project advisors: Frank Campana of Driftwood Middle School, in Broward County, Florida; Alfred Hess of Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance; Aaron Pallas of Michigan State University; Charlene Rivera of Development Asssociates; and Floraline Stevens of Los Angeles Unified School District.
- **State-of-the-art review**—We are reviewing the processes by which students become at risk with respect to learning, the responses schools have made and are making to increase student participation, and the incentives and barriers to meaningful reforms.
- **National conference**—We will hold a national conference on the education of at-risk and disadvantaged youth in April 1992 in San Francisco.
- **Commissioned papers**—We have arranged for experts with distinctive viewpoints to write about reform efforts in at-risk education from historical, cultural, and socioeconomic/sociocultural perspectives.
- **Case studies**—We will use a stepwise replication approach in studying 12 different sites so as to examine the robustness of particular instructional methods in different settings.
- **Tips for practitioners**—We will translate what we learn into practical guides for school administrators, teachers, and parents, aimed at promoting learning

These activities will lead to broader understanding of what makes programs for at-risk students effective and a clearer sense of how to focus increasingly limited financial resources in education to achieve the greatest benefits.

Dissemination and Fieldwork Plans:

Evaluation of Education Reforms for Students At Risk

March 1994

EA 027 939 pnts

American Institutes for Research
Youth & Community Research Group
P.O. Box 1113, Palo Alto, CA 94302-1113

Evaluation of Reforms for Students at Risk:
Plan for Field Studies and List of Candidate Sites, 1993-1995

Problem Statement

We need to learn about the characteristics, conditions, and instructional strategies of schools and school districts that are succeeding in meeting the educational needs of children and youth at risk. Our particular interest is in studying sites that promote equity and excellence in education by establishing and maintaining high(er) academic standards, providing students with safe and supportive climates for learning, and assisting students who are most in danger of dropping out of school.

Objectives of Field Studies

The field studies to be carried out as part of this evaluation of educational reforms will aim to:

- augment what is already known about the levels of effectiveness of selected programs for diverse student populations
- augment what is already known about specific program components that seem most closely related to effective student performance
- identify school-related systemic factors that may contribute to program success
- explore conditions and characteristics of the school-community contexts[1] that may affect successful program implementation and student achievement
- provide assistance to sites in gaining status as national models—e.g., by documenting information that can be used in support of requests made to the National Diffusion Network for status as national models

In addition, we will make the instruments that are developed based on these field studies available generally as resources for practitioners.

Overview of Approach

To learn about the contextual factors that sustain effective reforms, we plan to visit twelve sites nationwide that, based upon previous studies or national evaluations conducted by AIR and Johns Hopkins, appear effective at enhancing student performance. Much is already known about the components of these model programs; our aim is to enhance this knowledge base by identifying the systemic and school-community factors that undergird the reforms that are in place

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[1] By "school-community," we mean the relations among administrators, teachers, support staff and students within a school. Our research in this area builds upon our ongoing work with Dr. John Gardner, former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. In collaboration with Dr. Gardner, we are studying ways of assessing and building community in various settings (schools, neighborhoods, workplaces). In a recent monograph, Dr. Gardner argues that rebuilding community is a necessary prerequisite for revitalizing institutions and society as a whole (see Gardner, J.W., 1991, Building Community. Washington, DC: Independent Sector).

at the sites. We also plan to visit six additional sites that have programmatic features similar to the model sites. This stepwise replication is designed to examine the robustness of reform elements in varying contexts and to assess the effects of system dynamics and school-community status on the performance of these elements. We see building sound systemic and school-community relations that are sensitive to diverse circumstances and student populations as perhaps the underlying conditions most necessary for successfully implementing educational reforms.

To assist in the development of our methods and to broaden our understanding of the contextual factors that we will investigate in our nationwide site visits, we plan in 1993-94 to pilot-test our focus-group instruments and procedures with teachers, administrators, and students drawn from high schools on the San Francisco-San Jose Peninsula. These data collections will be used to fine-tune our procedures and to develop a preliminary base of information on school-communities in urban and suburban settings serving students at risk.

Schedule for Developmental and Field Studies

The pilot tests of our instruments and procedures will be conducted from December 1993 to March 1994. Our field studies of the 12 model sites selected for more formal study will occur at various times throughout the spring and fall 1994; roughly, we will visit six sites this spring and summer and six sites next fall. (Please note that schools to be visited in the summer are either summer programs for special populations or year-round programs.) Each of these visits will be made by two staff persons who will remain on site for three or four days. Return visits to one or two of these initially selected 12 sites and first-time visits to new, replicate sites will take place in early spring 1995. Visits to the six sites in 1995 will be one-person visits lasting up to four days each.

Developmental Studies

Rationale. We will conduct pre-tests to gauge the clarity of our instruments and the adequacy of our techniques for diverse school staff and students. Pre-testing our materials and procedures will help us improve the efficiency and accuracy of our data collection. The pilot-tests may also provide valuable preliminary information about systemic and school-community factors that influence school reform efforts. For example, many of the leading educational reforms acknowledge the importance of positive relations in school for students at risk. However, while there is growing interest in the influence of school-community on school effectiveness, there remains much to be learned about the elements of sound school-communities. What are the values and interaction patterns that promote community among diverse staff and students? How do successful schools surmount cultural barriers or mistrust as they attempt to build safe and supportive environments for learning? How can schools forge links with parents and others

outside the school to bolster the level of community within the school? Developing tools that address these deep-structure relations in schools will be useful for our nationwide site visits.

Methods. In 1993-94, we will pre-test various qualitative procedures for examining systemic and school-community factors related to school improvement. Our subcontractor, the Center for Disadvantaged Students, will pilot-test the data collection procedures to be used for assessing systemic factors. AIR will pre-test the focus-group instruments and techniques to be used for assessing school-community. Five local school districts and two archdiocese along the San Francisco-San Jose Peninsula, encompassing about twenty participating high schools, are now assisting us in these tests. Similar to the schools in our nationwide sample, most of these schools have culturally diverse student bodies and enroll high percentages of students at risk. These schools provide clear contrasts to each other in terms of available district resources and family and campus supports; at the same time, they offer interesting glimpses into the types of social and socioeconomic differences that affect peer-group relations and relations among students and teachers that may mitigate the effects of school reform efforts. The information gathered from these developmental studies will be used to (1) refine the instruments and techniques we will use for our nationwide site visits, (2) develop an assessment tool that we will use in measuring the level of community among school staff and students in our nationwide sample of schools, and (3) identify contextual factors influencing school effectiveness that we will investigate more thoroughly in our nationwide site visits.

Site Visits

The bulk of our resources will be used to plan and carry out formal visits to 18 school sites across the country. To provide adequate coverage of site activities, a total of 30 person-trips to these sites will be made from spring 1994 to spring 1995. As described below, two-person trips are planned to 12 sites in 1994 (i.e., 24 person-trips), and one-person trips are planned to each of six sites in 1995. Although return visits to one or two 1994 sites may be included in 1995 field activities, most of the 1995 sites will be new to the evaluation. The selection of new sites to visit in 1995 will follow a stepwise replication approach.

Selection of sites. The 12 sites to which formal visits will be made in 1994 are ones for which we have already gathered (or are gathering) considerable information; e.g., on program outcomes for students, program practices, and so on. Nine of these sites are ones that either AIR or CDS has evaluated previously over a multi-year period, one of the sites was strongly recommended by an author of one of the technical papers commissioned by this evaluation (i.e., Dr. Michelle Fine), and two of the sites were selected both because of their documented success with students at risk and because of their high levels of achievement of campus community. (More complete descriptions of these sites are presented in a later section of this planning document.) The

12 sites we plan to visit are listed below, grouped into six pairs according to their distinctive reform characteristics.

- **major urban reforms**—Lincoln-Bassett Elementary School, New Haven, Connecticut (Comer School Development Program) and Francis Scott Key Elementary School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Success for All)
- **low-budget, high systemic support efforts**—Cherry Hills Elementary School, Provo, Utah and Aynesworth Elementary School, Fresno, California
- **high community achievement sites**—one of the elementary sites working with the Child Development Project (to be recommended by Eric Schaps) and Archbishop Riordan High School, San Francisco, California
- **public-private ventures**—Barclay Elementary School, Baltimore, Maryland (Calvert School Program) and Goldblatt Elementary School, Chicago, Illinois (Paideia)
- **high school restructuring efforts**—Bellefonte High School, Bellefonte, Pennsylvania (Coalition for Essential Schools) and a charter school in Philadelphia (to be recommended by Michelle Fine)
- **work/learning combinations**—New Horizons/School-Within-a-School, Des Moines, Iowa and Cooperative Alternative Program, Coleman, Texas

Methods. Our formal studies of sites will rely heavily on qualitative research techniques to gather program and contextual information. In general, we will rely on summary reports, individual interviews, an informal survey, focus groups, shadowing of students, and classroom and campus observations, as outlined below.

- **Summary descriptions of the program, school, or district and any available reports on student achievement or program effectiveness** will be collected from each site, preferably prior to each site visit. No records data will be collected on individual students. Types of reports we will collect include:
    - brochures and program descriptions
    - brochures or other program materials intended for parents
    - *school* report cards, with test scores and demographic data
    - Chapter 1 evaluation reports
    - documents describing the results of district testing
    - internal or external evaluation reports
- **Interviews** will be carried out with district and school representatives, including as many of the following persons as are appropriate at particular sites:
    - the principal
    - the on-site program coordinator or facilitator
    - the district superintendent
    - one or more persons responsible for funding the program (e.g., Chapter 1 coordinator, local programs director, and/or private foundation representative)

- a program "champion" (e.g., the person who may have brought the program to the school and/or who serves or has served as a "cheerleader," "defender," "troop ralley-er," ongoing advocate, or grant writer)
- program developer or local contact person/disseminator, if the program was not created locally
- others with oversight responsibilities for the program who will not be included in the focus groups (see below)

Topics to be covered in these interviews will range from descriptions of goals and general approaches to available support mechanisms for program maintenance and improvement. Each interview will require approximately 40 minutes

- A voluntary **survey** of school staff will be made to assess the extent of community among these individuals on campus; the survey is likely to require approximately 15 minutes to complete. (A special incentive will be provided to encourage as many staff as possible to participate.)
- Three **focus groups** will be held on each campus: one group each with teachers, students, and, where possible, parents. These groups will discuss issues of school or program philosophy and objectives and current and ideal patterns of interpersonal relations on school campuses. Each focus group will require approximately 90 minutes
- Two students will be "**shadowed**," each one for at least one half-day, for the purpose of observing typical school activities and events. Each of the students selected for shadowing will be randomly chosen from students below the middle percentile in performance at his/her school (excluding special education students). Our aim will be to select a male and a female student of differing racial backgrounds
- Most of one site-visit day will be devoted to **classroom and campus observations**. These observations will be informally structured to permit us to learn about the content of the instructional programs that are offered and the climate(s) in which these programs are provided to students. Observations are intended to blend in as much as possible with the typical school routine

Interviews with program, school, and district staff will be scheduled before, during, or after school hours, and focus groups will be scheduled to meet either during school or after school, in the evenings, or on Saturday (schedule permitting). We aim to complete all site visits in three days (including evenings as necessary), but are prepared to remain on site for a fourth day should that be necessary to complete our work.

A typical site visit plan spanning a three-day period will roughly follow the schedule of activities shown in Table 1. (Please note that activities on particular days are not listed as they would necessarily be scheduled on that day).

Site Descriptions

The twelve sites we will visit in the spring and fall of 1994 are ones that have evidenced success in working with students at risk. In addition to representing several of the most prominent

Table 1 Schedule of Activities for a Typical Site Visit
Pre-Visit—Collect summary reports on the program, school and district, and student achievement and program effectiveness; mail staff surveys to site liaison; develop plan for inviting focus group participants; schedule all on-site activities
Day One—"Tour" campus and lunch with students and faculty; interview principal, program developer/site coordinator, and leading on-site program "champion;" conduct focus groups with students and teachers; collect additional summary reports as available
Day Two—Interview district superintendent and funding agent for school or program (e.g., Chapter 1 coordinator or, in some cases, foundation representative); shadow two students through at least one-half of their day at school (including the lunch period); conduct focus group with parents; collect staff surveys on campus community
Day Three—Carry out classroom and campus observations; conduct make-up interviews and focus groups and any other interviews that may be suggested by school/program staff; meet with principal and conduct exit briefing
Post-Visit—Prepare case study report describing site achievements, organizational characteristics, and effective instructional and program management strategies—highlighting the roles of both systemic support mechanisms and community among staff and students on campus. Share report with site representatives for comment and "postscript" prior to submission to OERI

reform initiatives, these sites also are representative of efforts to raise (and hold high) academic standards, provide students with safe and supportive climates for learning, and assist students who are most in danger of dropping out—themes given emphasis in the Request for Proposals (RFP) for this evaluation. These sites are described below in greater detail. Following each description, we have referenced the RFP themes for which the site is expected to be a particularly rich information source. (Note that the sites selected because of their concern for providing students with safe and supportive learning climates are also those we expect to inform our study of community in schools.)

Spring/Summer 1994 Sites—

Aynesworth Elementary School. Aynesworth is a year-round K-6 school located on the outskirts of Fresno, California. The Fresno school district is the third largest in the state. The school's 905 students reflect the diverse culture of the city: 35% Hispanic, 35% various Asian immigrant groups (Hmong, Vietnamese, Laotian), 15% African American and 15% "other," including white. Over 75% of the students receive free or reduced-price lunches, and the school

operates as a Chapter 1 schoolwide project. In the late 1980's, Aynesworth was studied as one of 20 exemplary national programs serving Chapter 1 students (Stringfield et al., 1988). For a decade, the school's students have scored above state and national averages on the California Assessment Program and other normed tests. The school is virtually free of the types of violence and disorder that have harmed neighboring schools. The school's "super kids" program has been copied by several other schools in the district and around the state. (*Raised Standards, Supportive Climate*)

Barclay Elementary School. Barclay is a K-8 school located in Baltimore, MD. Over 95% of the students attending Barclay are of non-European extraction, with the largest group being African American. Barclay is in the fourth year of an unusual effort to implement the curricular and instructional program from an elite private school in an inner-city public school context. A three-year evaluation, funded by the Abell Foundation (Stringfield, 1993), found that students involved in the program scored, on average, 20-40 percentile points higher than pre-program students had scored on the same tests during previous years. Program students in first, second, and third grades scored at or above the national average on a widely used norm-referenced test (the CTBS), and a norm-referenced test used in private schools (the ERB). The principal has observed that the halls and classrooms of Barclay, once noisy and occasionally violent places, are now orderly. An academic focus permeates the building. (*Raised Standards, Supportive Climate*)

Bellefonte High School. Bellefonte High School is located in rural Pennsylvania. A recently completed longitudinal study of promising programs found that Bellefonte was well on its way toward implementing the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) program. Bellefonte High School serves the small town of Bellefonte and the surrounding rural community. The school serves 550 students. Almost all ninth- and tenth-grade students are organized in 80- to 100-student "teams." Each team is served by an interdisciplinary faculty group that includes one teacher of English, history, math, and science. Non-tracked student teams work together on integrated curriculum units. Faculty teams meet together one hour per day to discuss progress on cross-disciplinary units and the progress being made by individual students. (CES, or "Sizer Schools," are built around nine common principles that are intended to characterize more humane and more intellectually challenging schools for students.) (*Raised Standards, Supportive Climate, Dropout Prevention*)

Cherry Hills Summer Migrant Program. The Alpine School District in Utah serves Hispanic and Native American summer migrant students at the Cherry Hills Elementary School. Approximately 50% of each summer's students attend the district's regular school program during the school year, and half spend their winters in Texas, Mexico, or other southern states in the United States. The program has developed a curriculum that builds on students' prior academic experiences without ignoring or punishing students who are entering at levels well below their expected grades. Some of the students, especially the children of Mexican workers, enter the summer program having had virtually no formal schooling. The district's director of federal

programs and the school's principal work with the state's migrant program director to create and sustain a program that encourages and closely monitors students' progress in basic reading and math skills, computer literacy, and integrated research, writing, and art work. The program has received state and national recognition for its efforts. (*Supportive Climate, Dropout Prevention*)

Cooperative Alternative Program. The Cooperative Alternative Program evidences a unique governance and organizational structure to meet the needs of students most at risk in the rural hill country of west central Texas. Results related to student dropout rates and measured gains in grade averages have been carefully documented over time and are most encouraging (Rossi, 1993). The superintendents of eight districts, with the leadership of the CAP principal, make up the management and governance board for the program. Over 40% of the students are Hispanic. Many CAP students are at risk on almost every dimension, including over-age for grade, high truancy or suspension rates, below grade level on basic courses, substance abuse, and pregnancy. Some students are referred to the program from the juvenile justice system. Extensive staff development is provided for teachers to work with this difficult population. Also, by pooling the resources from the participating districts, the CAP program is able to provide small classes, individualized instruction, individual and group counseling, vocational training, and paid-work experience. This type of inter-jurisdictional coordination may be a desirable approach to dropout prevention and recovery in remote rural areas. (*Supportive Climate, Dropout Prevention*)

Goldblatt Elementary School. Located in a low socioeconomic area of Chicago, Goldblatt Elementary is one of the original Paideia Schools (Adler, 1982). The school uses the writings of great authors in "Socratic Seminars" and tutorial contexts to ensure that all students receive a rigorous and rewarding academic experience. Not only are academic demands high, observers have described the school as an island of safety and comfort in an otherwise drug- and gun-infested, dangerous part of Chicago. In addition to being a Paideia School, Goldblatt offers an opportunity to examine the Chicago school reforms in an "at risk" context. (*Raised Standards, Supportive Climate*)

Fall 1994 Sites—

Archbishop Riordan High School. Archbishop Riordan High School in San Francisco provides a college preparatory curriculum to a predominantly black student body of about 650. The school is for boys only, requires that students and parents apply and, if possible, pay a modest tuition. However, Riordan has made it a policy to accept, to provide financial assistance to, and to work with students who are considered at risk of educational failure. Currently, a significant percentage of the student body is regarded by school officials at the time of enrollment as being at risk due to poverty, violence in their homes or neighborhoods, lack of stable family units, and/or poor academic preparation at the lower grades. Riordan maintains high academic standards and seeks to elevate the performance levels of all students (including those considered at risk). The

sense of the campus as a community for staff and students is particularly strong and provides the context for ongoing student assistance activities. (*Raised Standards*, *Supportive Climate*)

Charter Schools in Philadelphia. Serving an ethnically diverse, low-income student population, the Charter Schools in Philadelphia represent one of the most comprehensive attempts to restructure neighborhood high schools and reform the central school district. The objective of this reform is to enable educators and parents to "reinvent" the governance structures, instructional programs, and community linkages of high schools in order to improve educational opportunities for students at risk. Within each Philadelphia comprehensive high school, "charters," or intellectual communities, have been created in which relatively small, heterogeneous groups of students are assigned to about ten core teachers who work with students until graduation. Available data collected by the program suggest that charter students outperform non-charter students in attendance and course passage. Currently we are working with the directors of the Charter Schools to identify the particular high school that we will visit in 1994. (*Raised Standards*, *Supportive Climate*, *Dropout Prevention*)

Child Development Project Demonstration Sites. The Child Development Project was designed to enhance children's sociomoral development as well as their intellectual development during the elementary school years. 'Sociomoral,' a term that project staff use interchangeably with 'prosocial,' includes elements in four domains: cognitive characteristics; affective, motivational, and attitudinal characteristics; behavioral competencies; and action tendencies. The CDP includes several programmatic elements—a comprehensive classroom program, a set of schoolwide and community services, and a parent program—and strives to create caring communities in schools. Currently, twelve elementary schools in six districts across the country have adopted the CDP. At several sites, the project has succeeded in revitalizing ineffective programs: changing teacher behaviors, affecting positively students' perceptions of their teachers and their schools, and improving students' school performance. CDP sites serve a diverse constituency and include Chapter 1 schoolwide programs and programs working largely with Hispanic and migrant populations. We are now working with CDP staff to select the particular site that we will visit in 1994. (*Supportive Climate*).

Des Moines New Horizons/School-within-a-School Program. The school-within-a-school/New Horizons project provides counseling, attendance monitoring, career-related instruction, and work experience to high school students at risk throughout the Des Moines public school system. The project operates in various Des Moines high schools as schools-within-schools, which offer smaller class sizes and personalized instruction (average class size is about 12 students). Participants attend school-within-a-school/New Horizon classes and receive instruction in academic subjects identical to the regular curriculum, as well as instruction in life skills and career exploration activities. In some classes, academic and vocational staff serve as team-teachers.

As long as students remain in school, they receive after-school, paid jobs for an average of three hours per day, 15 hours per week. Three work advisors hold weekly group sessions for participants on job-related behaviors and skills, make job placements, monitor students' performance on the job, and visit students' homes. Looking at both the comparisons of dropout rates for individual years and the cumulative comparisons of the lengths of time to dropout for individual students over a four-year period, the New Horizons/School-within-a-School Program demonstrated its effectiveness in keeping students at risk enrolled. (*Supportive Climate, Dropout Prevention*)

Frances Scott Key Elementary School. Key Elementary has implemented the "Success for All" program in inner-city Philadelphia. The school serves a mixed Asian-immigrant and African-American community. This site has been the subject of three previous evaluations, all of which have reported positive findings. In addition, learning activities at Key—as at all Success for All sites— have recently been boosted as a result of a development award from the New American Schools Development Corporation. At the same time, Key has recently undergone a change in principal, there is presently a search underway for a new district superintendent, and Chapter 1 funds to the site have been reduced by the maximum amount allowed (i.e., 15%), due to population shifts reflected in the 1990 census. For these reasons, Key Elementary presents an excellent opportunity to observe a highly successful implementation of a well-researched program at a moment when the implementation may be under considerable stress. (*Raised Standards, Dropout Prevention*)

Lincoln Bassett Elementary School. Lincoln Bassett, located in a financially distressed area of New Haven, Connecticut, is one of the original Comer School Development Program schools. It began its involvement in the CSDP during the 1985-86 school year, and is regarded by school district and CSDP staff as one of the Program's outstanding implementation sites. A recent three-year study of "promising programs" also had praise for the program, finding that it provided a safe climate for students' learning with high expectations for student performance shared by school staff and parents. As a result, achievement gains for students at the site were unusually large. (*Supportive Climate, Dropout Prevention*)

Evaluation of Reforms for Students at Risk:
Dissemination Plan, 1993-1995

Problem Statement

Three audiences must be informed by the findings from this project: federal and state policymakers, education practitioners, and researchers interested in educational issues. The information needs of these audiences differ, and the audiences themselves may rely on distinctive styles of information processing. For this reason, it is essential that products be carefully planned and tailored to specific needs.

Objectives of Dissemination Efforts

Our dissemination efforts will aim to:

- augment the knowledge-base concerning the types of educational reform strategies that appear most effective in providing children and youth at risk with opportunities to learn
- increase awareness of the types of enhancements in systemic and within-school supports that are needed to successfully implement educational reform strategies for children and youth at risk
- document the accomplishments and findings of this evaluation of educational reforms for students at risk

Overview of Approach

As we approach the fieldwork phase of this project, we have begun to lay plans for the sorts of documents that will meet our dissemination objectives. Before turning to a description of these products, however, it is useful to describe how our approach will "set the stage" for these documents. To enhance the credibility of our products for policymaking and practitioner audiences, we plan to visit sites that are prominent in current discussions of educational reforms. In fact, the majority of the sites we will visit in 1993-94 are ones that will be reported at the federal level in the next few months to be among the most effective in meeting the needs of students at risk—determined on the basis of extensive, multi-year federal evaluations of national initiatives. To enhance the credibility of our findings for research audiences, given that only a relatively small number of case studies will be included in the evaluation, we have planned a 'stepwise replication approach' that will track the robustness of specific program components and contextual factors for producing positive outcomes. In short, we plan to make the most of a few sites by relating the selection of sites to the testing of hypotheses concerning specific instructional strategies and contextual conditions.

Summary of Products

Products to date. To date, we have held a national conference on issues related to reforms for students at risk (summarized in *Proceedings of the 1992 National Conference on Educational Reforms and At-Risk Students*) and prepared two documents that provide important background information for discussion of educational policies and practices. The first of these, entitled *Educational Reforms and Students at Risk: A Review of the Current State of the Art*, was released late last year (and re-released just this February) by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). The monograph summarizes what is known about (1) how children and youth become at risk of educational failure, (2) programmatic efforts and strategies that have been implemented to serve these students, and (3) barriers and incentives to pursuing educational reforms that have high probabilities of success in meeting the needs of these students. We expect that the monograph will be of greatest use to policymakers and researchers.

The second work, entitled *Schools and Students at Risk: Context and Framework for Positive Change*, was published both in hardcover and in a paperback edition by Teachers College Press in March 1994. This edited volume is an abridged collection of the views, insights, and research findings of several project staff and selected, prominent scholars who have been working for some time on issues and problems related to educational practices and students at risk. The papers by these scholars that are included in the volume are condensed versions of the ones that were commissioned by this reform evaluation and presented at our 1992 national conference. We expect that the edited volume will be an important reference for practitioners and researchers.

The full-length versions of these commissioned papers, together with other materials so far produced by this study, have been submitted to ERIC, and, as shown below, most have already been catalogued and are currently available to policymakers, practitioners, and researchers:

Boykin, A.W. (1992). Reformulating educational reform: Toward the proactive schooling of African American children. **UD 029 405**

DeYoung, A.J. (1992). At-risk children and the reform of rural schools: Economic and cultural dimensions. **RC 019 291**

Fine, M. (1992). Chart[er]ing urban school reform: Philadelphia style. **UD 029 423**

Gordon, E.W., & Yowell, C. (1992). Educational reforms for students at risk: Cultural dissonance as a risk factor in the development of students. (In ERIC Processing)

Grannis, J.C. (1993). Educational reforms for at-risk students: New York City case study. **UD 029 362**

Hess, G.A., Jr. (1992). Chicago school reform: A response to unmet needs of "at risk" students. **UD 029 426**

McPartland, J.M. (1992). Dropout prevention in theory and practice. (In ERIC Processing)

Montgomery, A.F., & Rossi, R.J. (1993). Educational reforms and students at risk: A review of the current state of the art. **TM 020 568**

Noley, G. (1992). Educational reform and American Indian cultures. **RC 019 292**

Rumberger, R.W., & Larson, K.A. (1992). Keeping high-risk Chicano students in school: Lessons from a Los Angeles middle school dropout prevention program. **RC 019 290**

Valdivieso, R., & Nicolau, S. (1992). Look me in the eye: A Hispanic cultural perspective on school reform. **RC 019 293**

Vergun, P. (1992). Proceedings of the 1992 national conference on educational reforms and at-risk students. Palo Alto, CA: American Institutes for Research. **UD 029 571**

Planned products. Over the next two years, we plan to provide policymaker briefings based on our results and to develop two additional types of products for our constituent audiences:

- **practice-oriented materials**
  - brochure or pamphlet: *Making Schools Work for Students At Risk: A Summary of Ideas and Approaches to School Reforms*
  - instrument: *Organizational Self-Assessment Guide for Schools Serving Students At Risk* (designed to assess the quality of interpersonal relations and organizational/systemic dynamics within schools)
- **final technical research report**
  - cross-site analyses
  - case studies
  - description of methods

For the **policymaker briefings*** , we will prepare background materials and panel presentations for two audiences: staff of the house and senate committees concerned with education issues and staff of the many State and Federal policy groups located in Washington, D.C. The latter briefing, which would also be planned for Washington, D.C., can be coordinated either by OERI or an organization such as the American Educational Research Association.

Our **practice-oriented materials** will be aimed at a broad audience of practitioners and policymakers. These materials will be based on findings gleaned from various project activities, including the national conference, state-of-the-art literature review, commissioned papers, and the case studies. Also, they will be enriched by our prior conceptual work and research on effective schools for students at risk. For example, we will draw from both our recent work with John W. Gardner on assessing and building "community" in various settings (e.g., schools, neighborhoods, workplaces) and our 1989-1993 national evaluation of the School Dropout Demonstration Assistance Program to describe the elements of effective school support systems for students at

* These briefings and the background materials to be prepared for them are not contract deliverables.

risk. Similarly, we will build upon our conceptualization of schools as high-reliability organizations (which was first presented in the third section of our state-of-the-art monograph), providing relevant examples of barriers and incentives to reform drawn from our recent national evaluation of special strategies associated with Chapter 1 programs.

Our initial practice-oriented material, described above as either a brochure or pamphlet, will summarize ideas and approaches to implementing effective educational reforms for students at risk. These approaches, for example, will include (1) building positive relations within schools and (2) strengthening systemic support systems. The booklet will be brief, touching on key points raised in our work to date and providing references to more comprehensive materials. Our aim will be to disseminate the booklet widely, with the active support of the Publications Office within the Office of Research and/or other groups, such as the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National School Boards Associations, or the Association of School Curriculum Developers. At a later date, when most or all of our field studies are completed, we will prepare the *Organizational Self-Assessment Guide for Schools Serving Students At Risk*. This guide will attempt to gauge the levels of interpersonal and systemic supports for students at risk in schools. Designed for use by school staff, this guide will aim to promote interest, discussion, and action on school campuses to enhance the learning opportunities for all students.

To provide greater detail and coverage of our research findings, our **final technical report** will provide (1) cross-site analyses of successful strategies and effective organizational conditions, (2) case-study descriptions of the participating sites, and (3) a review of all the activities undertaken and the methods employed during the term of the project. As an appendix, this report will include copies of all data collection instruments used during the fieldwork phase of the project. While this report will be prepared for audiences within OERI, it will also be useful in communicating to others the aims and accomplishments of this reform evaluation. For example, we will use the case studies in our report to initiate discussions with the National Diffusion Network on behalf of those sites that have implemented particularly promising strategies in working with students at risk.

Schedule for Product Development

At present, our plan is to schedule **policymaker briefings** sometime in 1995, with final arrangements to be made in discussions with our COTR, other OERI staff, representatives from firms conducting the other eleven reform evaluations for OERI, other interest groups identified by OERI as key stakeholders for these evaluations, and legislative staff persons. For the **initial practice-oriented material**, we propose amending the deliverables schedule outlined in the recent contract modification (dated 9/3/93). Specifically, we propose submitting a draft of our initial practice-oriented material by March 31st, with the final draft submitted by May 31st. This schedule change would allow us to incorporate significant preliminary findings from our focus groups and

(initial) site visits into the summary brochure, thus increasing its usefulness for policymakers and practitioners. For the **final practice-oriented material** (i.e., the Organizational Self-Assessment Guide), we will follow the planned deliverables schedule. Specifically, our assessment guide will be submitted by August 1995. The **final technical report** of this reform evaluation will be submitted by October 1995.

Proceedings of the 1992 National Conference on Educational Reforms and At-Risk Students

EA 027 939 - part 3

American Institutes for Research
Youth & Community Research Group
P.O. Box 1113, Palo Alto, CA 94302-1113

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Executive Summary

The National Conference involved educators and researchers in a dialogue about educational reforms and at-risk students. Ten invited presentations organized into general sessions on cultural differences and ongoing reform initiatives provided impetus for discussion. The Proceedings convey the content of both the presentations and the discussions which ensued.

Participants were in general agreement on the following: Students are not "naturally" *at risk*; the "at-riskness" develops from the interaction between student characteristics and characteristics of the school environment. Students may be classified according to the typical risk categories (e.g., a student may be poor, a member of a minority group, a non-native English speaker), but those who may fall into these categories can succeed academically and socially if the school values their assets and is prepared to meet their needs.

Three key areas to be addressed by the members of each school community, and by the educational community as a whole, are:

I. Appreciation of cultural differences
II. Addressing students' personal needs
III. Expanding parent & community involvement

Within these areas, conference participants identified strategies worthy of attention; these are marked by a "•" in the sections below.

I. Appreciation of Cultural Differences

- Integrating the different cultural traditions of the U.S.
- Drawing on the personal experiences of students
- Adapting to differences in the way students learn
- Making schooling relevant

The *appreciation of cultural differences* is important for a variety of reasons. First, much instructional material still falls short of *integrating different cultural traditions.* Historically, attention has been focused on the "mainstream" tradition, a tradition centered on the experiences of male descendants of early European immigrants. Other leaders and other cultural traditions have been given too little attention in American schools. Second, not only should the curriculum be fair, parts of it should *draw on the personal experiences of students* and their families to help students understand the subject matter. This will tend to increase the personal relevancy of the curriculum for women and for minority youth. It will also facilitate teachers' efforts to help their students appreciate cultural differences.

Third, schools need to be aware of and *adapt to differences in the way students learn.* Experience and academic research both show that students from different cultural traditions may have different ways of optimally acquiring knowledge. For example, some students may feel more comfortable working collectively whereas others may prefer working individually on tasks.

Finally, school personnel must *make schooling relevant for students.* School staff must deal with the reality that secondary students may not feel that the completion of high school has instrumental value. On the one hand, students may not see what they are taught in school as being useful for participation or survival in the community of which they are a part. On the other hand, while schools in economically depressed areas may insist that a high school diploma is needed to get a job and to keep from being unemployed, students in these areas may realize that high school graduation does not significantly contribute to one's ability to find work if the community lacks employment opportunities and the link between the worlds of school and work is weak.

II. Addressing students' personal needs

- Integrating social services needed by students
- Creating small, more intimate schools
- Restructuring classes to allow students to work with the same teacher or with the same teams of teachers for extended periods

Today's schools need to better *address students' personal as well as academic needs.* This can happen in part by *integrating into the schools the social services needed by students,* be they medical care, counseling, mentoring, or family life education. These types of services are often difficult for at-risk students to obtain elsewhere, but they are essential for students' academic and personal success.

Schools should also be structured to serve the need students have for stable relationships with adults and for personal attention. Two excellent ways of achieving this have been developed. One is the *creation of small, more intimate schools* (out of big schools when necessary), so that students and teachers can better identify with each other and create true communities of learning. The second is the *restructuring of classes to allow students to work with the same teacher or with the same teams of teachers for extended periods.* This can be accomplished through allowing for flexible class periods to permit deeper exploration of subject matter, and/or through allowing teachers and students to remain together for more than a semester or year so that they will have more opportunity to grow and to learn together.

III. Expanding parent & community involvement in schools

- Ensure that parents and teachers work as a team to educate children
- Secure substantive participation on the part of parents in the making of school policy
- Be sensitive to cultural differences among staff and parents

The further *involvement of parents* in schools is critical to the success of schooling efforts. When schools do not actively reach out to parents, they lose not only the valuable contributions parents (even busy parents) can make to their children's education, they risk that students will pick up the signal that students' parents (or cultural groups) are not respected for their potential to contribute to the school. Teachers and principals need to *ensure that parents and teachers work as a team to educate children.* Schools and parents can do a lot more to see that together they form a supportive network for students, regardless of whatever constraints they both face.

Involvement of parents should also include *substantive participation on the part of parents in the making of school policy.* In order to more closely involve parents in schools, school staff need to be as sensitive to cultural differences among staff and parents as they need to be with respect to cultural differences among students. This extends particularly to exploring various forms and forums for encouraging meaningful discussion between parents, teachers, and school administrators.

Concluding Thoughts

Although it was recognized by participants that many schools lack needed funds, additional funds may not be as essential to change as is often assumed. Effectively implementing the sorts of reforms described here requires a reorganization of effort—a rethinking of the ways schools interact with and treat students. Schools where educators help with aspects of nurturing formerly considered to be the sole responsibility of parents (such as providing nutritional and medical care, family life education, and after-school educational programs)—and where parents help with education on behalf of the children—seem to work better for all students. Schools and communities should work collectively to educate students, rather than addressing their responsibilities in the traditional way, through a strict division of labor.

As Dr. Waldemar Rojas said in his keynote speech at this conference, "What we do is only dependent on what we want to do...We need to refocus on the child."

Purpose of the National Conference

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) is conducting an evaluation of education reforms for at-risk youth. The evaluation is one of a set of twelve examining education reforms that are being sponsored by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) within the U.S. Department of Education.[1] The Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students at Johns Hopkins University (CDS) is the subcontractor for this project.

Together with CDS, AIR held a national conference on Educational Reforms for At-Risk Youth at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel in San Francisco, California, on Friday and Saturday, April 24–25, 1992. The purpose of the conference was:

- to let educators and researchers in the field know more about our study of educational reforms and at-risk youth
- to provide project staff and conference participants networking opportunities, especially across occupational lines
- to give practitioners and researchers early access to the material covered in the papers commissioned for the project, as well as to give feedback to the authors while the final papers are still in process
- to gain for the research team participants' input with respect to possible study designs; for example, as to which elements of programs to help at-risk youth are most likely to be effective, sustainable, and transferable
- to get information from participants regarding possible study sites and the criteria for choosing sites that would best define our understanding of current programs designed to help students at risk.

[1] The other types of programs that OERI is having evaluated are: Assessment of Student Performance, Curricular Reform, Early Childhood Education, Parent & Community Involvement, School-Based Management, School-to-Work Transition, Student Diversity, Systemic Reform, Teacher Professionalism & Professionalism of Other School Personnel, Technology, and Uses of Time.

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Participation in the Workshop

Approximately 70 individuals, 220 schools, 140 district and state offices, and 135 other organizations were notified directly about the conference and this evaluation of educational reforms, as were the numerous researchers and educators who attended the 1992 annual convention of the American Educational Research Association. In addition, conference advertisements appeared in *Educational Researcher, Phi Delta Kappan, and Education Week*. Approximately 180 individuals participated in the conference. Those who were able to attend the conference interacted with project staff and with one another at functions ranging from formal assemblies to dinner out on the town. Educators and researchers shared success stories and challenging moments. They discussed their expectations of each other, and gave each other suggestions of ways to get educators to apply and engage in research and researchers to be more mindful of the immediate as well as the longer-term needs of teachers and administrators. Nine papers were presented, and participants had the opportunity to discuss them with the authors and with other researchers and educators. Several participants made comments regarding the types of studies they would like to see conducted. Participants provided examples of strategies that, in their experience, have led to barriers to reform being overcome and, thus, have contributed to effective, sustainable, and transferable school-level programs. Many participants offered to review products of this evaluation, and they have begun to do so, returning comments on specially designed forms. Some participants recommended schools or districts for participation in the field work portion of this evaluation and suggested that we contact particular school officials. The following table, Table 1, shows a breakdown of conference participants by occupation and by affiliation with this project.

Table 1: Profile of Participants

Type of Participant	# Attending
Conference Attendees	
National Science Foundation	2
U.S. and California Department of Education Staff	4
School District Staff	35
Principals	11
Counselors	1
Teachers	10
Undergraduate/Graduate Students	18
University Professors/Researchers	38
Non-Profit/Research Institute Staff	37
Lawyers	1
Others	3
Project Staff	8
Presenters/Speakers	11
Project Advisors	3
Total	= 182

Format of the Conference

The agenda for the conference is provided in Table 2. A primary purpose of the conference was to assess the needs of school communities and researchers, needs that could be served through our evaluation of educational reforms to help at-risk students. The conference was structured with the aim of using panel presentations by top researchers and evaluators to further inform participants and to spark ideas to be followed up in the small group sessions that followed the panels. Each of the panel sessions was videotaped.

In the opening session, Dr. Robert Rossi of AIR described the background of the study and explained the aims and format of the conference. The first two panel sessions ("Building On and Integrating Cultural Diversity" and "Encouraging School Effectiveness and Student Persistence") were followed by small group discussion sections.

The conference participants were randomly divided into five groups for the first small group session to ensure that an even mix of teachers, administrators, graduate students and researchers would be found in each of the discussion groups. Participants were divided into five *different* groups for the second small group session. Within these sessions, we asked attendees for their sense of which types of programs are most successful in helping at-risk youth, and whether these programs might be replicated at other sites. Each of the paper presenters was responsible for facilitating a session, and session participants discussed issues that had been brought up by the presenters and discussed the needs of their schools and systems. In each session, an AIR staff member documented the issues raised and the comments of participants. AIR staff then presented synopses of the discussion sections to the full assembly immediately following the sessions and invited others to make additional remarks. Throughout the conference, discussions took place in both formal and informal settings.

At the close of the final presentations, an open microphone was provided and conference participants were encouraged to ask questions of the presenters and to give their suggestions for ways of improving the research study.

Table 2: Conference Agenda

National Conference on Educational Reforms and At-Risk Students
Sir Francis Drake Hotel, San Francisco
April 24–25, 1992

Friday, April 24th

10:30–1:00	Registration—Receive conference identification and informational materials (Walnut Room)
1:00–1:30	Opening Session—Orientation session for conference participants (Empire Room)
1:00–1:15	Welcome and Description of Study Design
1:15–1:30	Purpose of Conference and Introductions
1:30–5:45	Session I: Building On and Integrating Cultural Diversity
1:30–3:00	*Panel: Edmund Gordon, Grayson Noley, Rafael Valdivieso, and Brenda Allen (Empire Room)*
3:00–3:15	*Break*
3:15–4:30	*Small-Group Discussions (Monterey, Cypress, Carmel, Tudor-A, and Tudor-C Rooms)*
4:30–4:45	*Break*
4:45–5:45	*Summary Session with Panel Members (Empire Room)*
5:45–6:45	Reception (Franciscan Room)
7:00–10:00	San Francisco Dining Experiences

Saturday, April 25th

8:30–12:00	Session II: Encouraging School Effectiveness and Student Persistence
8:30–10:00	*Panel: Alan DeYoung, Joseph Grannis, Russell Rumberger, and Katherine Larson (Empire Room)*
10:00–10:15	*Break*
10:15–11:30	*Small-Group Discussions (Monterey, Cypress, Carmel, Tudor-A, and Tudor-C Rooms)*
11:30–12:15	*Summary Session with Panel Members (Empire Room)*
12:15–1:30	Lunch (Franciscan and Renaissance Rooms)
1:45–4:45	Session III: Barriers and Incentives to Implementing Reforms
1:45–2:30	Keynote Address: Waldemar Rojas (Empire Room)
2:30–3:30	Discussion Panel: Michelle Fine and G. Alfred Hess
3:30–3:45	Break
3:45–4:45	Open Forum with Keynote Speaker and Panel Members
4:45–5:00	Closing Session

Included in the following sections of this ***Proceedings*** *are summaries of the papers presented at the conference. These are not abstracts of the presented papers; the papers will be available separately as individual monographs and as an edited volume. The synopses presented here reflect the tone and content of the actual presentations made at the conference.*

Session I:
Building On and Integrating Cultural Diversity
Presentations by Edmund Gordon, Grayson Noley, Rafael Valdivieso, and Brenda Allen

Dr. Edmund Gordon on Cultural Dissonance

Previously, people at risk were those who had physical, sensory, or mental disabilities, but now social status can be viewed as a factor that may put certain persons at risk. Coming from a broken home, being non-verbal, being less physically healthy, lacking stable role models and community ties, these are each risk factors. At-riskness may also result from societal-individual interaction; that is, a failure of the surrounding environment to support the person's individual, culturally-influenced needs. People whose culture is different from the predominant culture may not find their developmental needs met, as their needs may not match those of the dominant reference group. Culture is a mediator of learning, affecting and shaping belief systems, cognitive styles, morays, and ways of doing things. As culture helps to define a person's identity, culture, cultural interchange, and cultural dissonance influence behavioral adaptation.

This perspective suggests that the usefulness of school governance reform, raising student standards, and monitoring performance via standardized testing are limited. Since status affects access to resources, expectations, and the quality of society's investment in individuals, school reforms must directly result in assistance that addresses people's needs.

Dr. Grayson Noley on the Historical Experiences of Native Americans

In 1637, the Pequots were almost completely killed off by the Puritans, only a few years after their first encounter—and such behavior was justified as the result of "the hand of God." American history has been characterized by conflict resulting from the violence and land hunger of Europeans. Although the battlefields are now the classrooms, the conflicts continue to be serious, and, for many Native Americans, life-threatening. This cultural conflict is at the root of Native Americans' problems in American classrooms. Many schools were started, perhaps with good intentions, to Christianize and to facilitate the merging of European-Americans and Native Americans. However, the actions of European-American educators and policymakers were often in conflict with cultures that had met the needs of Native Americans for many years; worse still, European-Americans acted as though they believed Native American societies to be devoid of culture and learning.

As a result of harsh assimilationist policies in schools for American Indians, students began to lose their own cultures. Following the harshest of such policies, the Progressive movement attempted to increase understanding of American Indian cultures by school staff and by the students who were losing touch with their native culture. Perhaps by now, we have finally reached a point where American Indian students can be served by American schools, through keeping in mind the experiences of the past.

Noley questions the worth of having a common culture, as this culture has typically been based more-or-less exclusively on the dominant culture. To truly welcome diversity, we need to make schools accessible to all students. After all, schools should be better able to meet students' needs than are students.

Dr. Rafael Valdivieso on Differences and Commonalties in the Experiences of Hispanic/Latino Youth

There are enormous differences among Hispanic-Americans based on language, country of origin, social class, race, gender, and recency of immigration, factors which need to be separated for analytical purposes. Schools' reactions to these differences are also important, as is a better understanding of the interaction between home and school over time. Parent involvement in their children's education is necessary throughout the school career.

Currently, "typical" Hispanic children and non-Hispanic children are supposed to have gained identical knowledge before entering school, but Hispanic children are often not considered to be ready by the appropriate age. Hispanic children often start out with, and stay with, the "6 Rs": Remedial Reading, Remedial Writing, and Remedial Arithmetic. These students are often even more dependent than other children on the school curriculum to catch up, because their parents tend to be less able to help them with their schoolwork. What such children need is on-time remedial education and active, involved learning that will act to tap their natural curiosity. Children need to be given help that addresses their needs *where they are* and *at the time they need it,* not in accordance with our pre-set plan of where they should be by a certain arbitrary age.

By middle school, the language problems may have lessened, but Hispanic students often still lack access to the more challenging curricula. A disparity between students' ability and teachers' expectations may foster behavioral or motivational problems, leading students to drop out mentally if not yet physically. By high school, the material covered with "high" and "low" achievers becomes completely different, and increased guidance and assistance with respect to motivation are absolutely needed to ensure that kids stay in school and are able to make the transition from school to work. In contrast to students who grew up with the present educational system, recently-arrived immigrants often do

better academically, perhaps because they have not lost the belief that there is a reason for learning and for succeeding in school.

Many Hispanic parents simply do not know how to help their child. In many cases, an Hispanic student is trying to be the first generation to graduate from high school. We want to move towards schools that *reduce*, rather than create or increase, the risks students face.

Dr. Brenda Allen on Differences across Ethnic Groups in the Way Children Learn—a presentation of Dr. Wade Boykin's research

For years, programs have been based on the idea that African-American children have learning problems because of problems with them or problems with their homes and families. These programs tried to alter African-American students' cognitive attitudes and motivation. However, it seems that contextual factors derived from cultural experiences function to elicit the use of cognitive skills; in other words, culture affects how people function in certain contexts. The goal, then, is to work with the cultural capital that children bring to the classroom; such an approach tends to increase student performance on standardized tests.

In the case of African-American culture, there could be said to be three realms of experience—the mainstream (those experiences common to all Americans), the minority (which involves strategies to cope with oppression), and the Afro-cultural (cultural characteristics which have their basis in west African cultures). Typically those African-Americans who are most at risk in school are those low-income people who have strong Afro-cultural characteristics and least access to mainstream culture. In many cases, African-American children are not receiving from schools the kinds of stimulation they need to sustain optimal motivation. For example, many African-American children seem to do better at remembering and learning amid an environment with a lot going on, music playing, etc., whereas many white children seem to do better in environments with less movement and music. Also, African-American children seem to do best working in supportive teams, rather than in individually competitive situations. Such differences may stem from differences that the children have grown up with in their homes. The lack of utilization of African-American-style learning patterns in school, plus the tendency to degrade the value of such learning patterns, may combine to turn children against school. We need to move past just the celebration of culture, to an understanding of culture's effect on how people function. If we do so, it will allow us to help children to better learn how to think and function in our society.

Session II:
Encouraging School Effectiveness and Student Persistence
Presentations by Alan DeYoung, Joseph Grannis, Russell Rumberger, and Katherine Larson

Dr. Alan DeYoung on the Other At-Risk Youth—the Situation in Rural America

Rural schools tend to be more different from each other than is probably the case with urban schools. In rural areas, such as those studied by DeYoung in West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, and Tennessee, the school often serves as a community center—perhaps the only one in the area—and thus consolidations of schools may put both the students and the community at risk. In depressed communities, the tax base continues to decline while federal and state governments have been unable or unwilling to compensate for revenue losses.

Counter to current stereotypes, rural life today is not easy. A higher percentage of poor African-American children live in rural than in metropolitan areas; 44% of African-American children in rural areas are below the poverty line, as compared with 33% in metropolitan areas. Hispanic and Native American children face similar situations. Many rural residents do minimum wage, non-agricultural work. Two-thirds of all rural women work, though day care is scarce.

In some communities, many parents believe that too much school can be detrimental—that once a local job is available, you should leave school. Unfortunately such jobs do not pay much and are disappearing. Nevertheless, having a high school diploma does not seem to significantly affect the likelihood that one will become unemployed. In these communities, people often want to remain close to their families, and many manage to subsist through doing occasional paid-work, hunting, and farming. In areas where there is a limited local structure of opportunity, urging kids not to drop out may not seem to make sense. In such areas, the perceptions regarding the utility of schooling which are held by some families and students can be very different from those held by school officials.

Nevertheless, there are examples of innovative, successful programs in rural areas. For example, one of the schools studied by De Young has succeeded in getting students to finish school through expanding vocational programs and by making teachers individually and collectively responsible for students' success (rather than holding the students responsible for the problems associated with unemployed parents, living in trailers, etc.). This school has also succeeded through endeavoring to make sure kids are given respect and are helped to achieve high standards.

Dr. Joseph Grannis on Reform in New York City

Grannis has evaluated a set of dropout programs instituted by New York City in middle schools and high schools during the last half of the eighties. Many more students were eligible for these programs than were targeted. Services have included home visitations, guidance counseling, linkage between middle school and high school, facilitation of access to health providers, tutoring, and part-time jobs for students. However, most students got only a fraction of the services intended. And, for the most part, these were add-on programs; the academic curriculum was not affected.

A few schools that were doing better after three years went beyond add-on programs—for example, take the case of one school located in a neighborhood previously known for a very high rate of drug-related crime: In this school, all targeted students had classes together for part of the school day, allowing support staff to work with them more readily; there was increased socializing among program staff, parents, and teachers; special activities, like a greenhouse and store, were made possible by creative financing and rule-bending; and program staff helped teachers keep track of students period by period. Although the district objected to this school's procedures because it turned in inadequate records about what it was doing, the school has created a model that other schools are trying to follow.

Attendance was found to be highest in September and then to decline through most of the following months. It is clear that something happening in schools must account for this. Grannis found the following things to be important:

- *Adaptive Instruction*—We need to adapt instruction to the needs and cultures of the students and to the environment of the students and school; kids want more than "chalk and talk"
- *Coordinated Academic, Personal and Social Supports*
- *Supportive School Environment*
- *Parent Engagement*—Parents, too, need positive messages; they are usually just contacted when their child has been misbehaving. Program staff today are helping children in the homeless shelters to get to school and helping their parents to support their child's development and academic education
- *Shift from the idea of Students-At-Risk to seeing Schools as Risk-Making Places*—Different groups are more sensitive to aspects of structure and education such as the failure to provide small class size
- *Boundary Crossing*: High school staff should be reaching out to junior high school students. Staff and other service providers must ensure that the students who really need help get it; health and school professionals need to work together

- *Systemic Funding*
- *School-wide Planning*
- *Incorporation of Community-Based Organizations*
- *Long- and Short-Range Goals*
- *User Friendly Data System*—to help keep schools aware of students' histories since data doesn't get to schools in time
- *Advisor/Mentor for Every Student*

These findings were the basis of recommendations to the New York City school system. A new program in the high schools based on these recommendations, Project Achieve, is beginning to record positive results for students.

Drs. Katherine Larson and Russell Rumberger on Changing School Environments to Create Advocates and Mentors for Students

In a survey in 1913, 412 out of 500 children interviewed said that they preferred factory labor over the humiliation, monotony, and often sheer cruelty they experienced in school as culturally different children. Similar feelings are experienced by many Hispanic children today. Schools are driving children out of school, through disapproval and low expectations, into poverty, unemployment, and dead-end jobs. Adults must form a culture of support, care and concern for all children, no matter how difficult some children may be to teach.

Larson & Rumberger's project is called ALAS (in Spanish, "wings") or Achievement for Latino Students through Academic Success. They have documented both the subtle and not so subtle negative experiences Hispanic children have with adults in some school environments. In contrast, their project aims to foster a close, caring environment in which middle school children are cared for *and* held accountable. Middle school is a very critical period in a child's education; the National Education Longitudinal Survey of Eighth Graders has shown that children who are held back in the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades are eleven times more likely to drop out of school between the 8th and 10th grades. Experiences that children have early in their academic careers have significant effects on their longer-term success.

In Larson's and Rumberger's study, students were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups, and participating students included special education students. Judging from the experience of this study, five things seem to be necessary to improve the educational experiences of at-risk youth:

- social metacognitive problem-solving training
- frequent feedback to students and parents from teachers
- close attendance monitoring

- student bonding with adults who can give them a sense of belonging
- parent participation and monitoring. Program staff have tried to act as intermediaries or advocates between the parents and the school. They have attempted to treat every child individually

The program staff hold themselves responsible for students' performance; they define professional success in terms of their students' success rather than on the effort they expend. Individuals who see themselves as accountable for their students' progress are motivated to continually assess the extent of it. This program can be partially financed through the increased funds that are generated by increased student attendance. Schools are learning communities and need a high degree of cooperation. There will always be students who need schools to make adjustments and exceptions for them. We are all part of the problem and we are all part of the solution.

Content of Small-Group Discussions

The following is a synthesis of the discussions that took place after the panel sessions among the members of the assembly and in the ten small group discussion sections.

Setting the Stage for School & Education Reform for At-Risk Youth

1. Who is At-Risk?

- The determination of who is at risk is sometimes based on false assumptions about certain types of students. For example, educators should not assume that children from single-parent families are necessarily worse off than those in physically-intact families; some two-parent families have more serious problems than single-parent ones, and not all families with a traditional makeup are healthy. Educators must never lose sight of the fact that many students who fit into the classic at-risk categories seem to perform acceptably in any setting. Several studies have shown that many educators let their expectation of a student's performance influence the quality of instruction and attention given that student. The result of such expectations can be devastating for individual students and can act to further reinforce stereotypes and statistical tendencies about which types of students are "naturally" at risk.
- It is essential not to group kids into at-risk or not-at-risk categories by ethnicity. In the first place, in talking about the problems of "Hispanic students," it is all too easy to forget the original disclaimer that there are Hispanic students who do very well in schools. If over-emphasis is put on ethnic determinants of at-risk status, such students become at risk of being treated as though they were "at-risk" and therefore of losing access to the mainstream experiences and higher level curricula they would have been able to handle. Although most of the paper presentations focused on students from disadvantaged minority groups, attention needs to be paid as well to helping European-American children who are at risk. Examples of work that has been done to help such students include studies of Appalachia and a program sponsored by the California Department of Education called OPTIONS. OPTIONS aims to help disadvantaged white students cope better with, among other things, the changes in their lives brought about by increasing diversity.
- Majority group members should be encouraged to recognize that large numbers of majority group children are at risk of failing in school. Our schools are not doing particularly well in meeting the needs of students of *any culture*. Moreover, very few white, middle class children actually fit the ideal-typical "mainstream" profile: most children coming from the "dominant" culture can be expected to face problems

of cultural adjustment similar to those that confront minority group children. Furthermore, the effects of nourishing the misperception that "white" children are a homogeneous cultural majority must over the long run be detrimental. People should be challenged to remember that virtually all members of the majority group have ancestors who were discriminated against—who were at one time members of minority groups—and to develop solidarity with each other based on that historical fact.

- As more people come to understand that their own fate and/or their children's fate are linked to the fates of minority group children and handicapped children, progress will occur in our ability to keep youth from becoming at risk.

2. The Context of School Communities

- Schools sometimes forget that the students have to be prepared for the far future—to be able to accept and adapt to challenges of the future such as new technologies and the increasing variety in the backgrounds of others.
- Discussions that focus on culture need to be informed by the recognition that a culture cannot easily and permanently be defined (to define a culture in precise terms hazards stereotyping).
- Schools and the communities surrounding them must ultimately work to lessen racism if they are to be successful at removing ethnicity as a factor that places students at risk of failing in school.
- It is important both to value diversity and to work to foster the shared cultural values which are essential to a community's cohesion.
- Educators need to observe the social and economic situation in the communities of which students are a part; what may seem dysfunctional in a traditional mainstream, upper middle class environment can be functional in other environments. A community characterized by an opposition to education may be reacting to the situationally-accurate perception that schooling *is* of little value. Although their teachers may urge students onto higher education, others in the community may see such education as driving a wedge between the young people and their community. Individuals may perceive that the outcome of educational achievement may be to move from a familiar and adequate lifestyle to a course of action that, though it may carry higher status in the larger society, may not feel qualitatively superior. If local structures of opportunity were created in an impoverished rural area, it is likely that the community would cease to doubt the utility of education.
- To succeed over the long-run, educators and others need to increase support for schools among all groups of people, not just among parents and teachers. Many rural

schools, for example, have been hurt by retirees and by industries that just want the cheap labor, and who work together to maintain low local tax levels at the expense of local students' education.

3. Current Institutional Considerations

- When school adults respect students for their academic, artistic, or athletic abilities and for their potential to contribute, it creates a very positive environment. How do we build a commitment to advocacy and a sense of appreciation on the part of school people for their students? It seems as though teachers who are reasonably comfortable with their own professional and social competencies (e.g., math and dealing with multiculturalism) are better able to respect and to honor their students, more likely to respect their students enough to demand that they learn. It may be that this sense of comfort with self is the thing that enables us to embrace and support other people. Children notice whether adults respect each other; adults need to break the cycle of negative responses to negative experiences and need to become positive role models. We also have to acknowledge that we can not do it all by ourselves: One important competency is learning how to work together to profit from each other's strengths. As Americans we tend to want to see ourselves as independently competent. Almost all our popular folk heroes are independently competent, and even our view of the family has changed to give us less of an insight into our need for a sense of community. As a result, many of us have difficulty dealing with the tension between this cultural tendency and our need to work together and help each other.

- A heavy emphasis on testing seems to have a negative effect on teachers' priorities; if their occupational success is tied to their students' performance on national standardized tests rather than their students' engagement in school and acquisition of knowledge, teachers will be tempted to (and even expected to) teach to the test (as has happened to a certain degree in countries like Japan).

- Many available ideas for helping at-risk children are not put into practice because of a lack of available funds; for example, funds must be secured to allow smaller class sizes so that teachers can devote more time to preparation and to each student, as well as for essential "extras" like counselors and libraries.

- To add insult to injury, in many schools teachers are getting fired or harassed for going to bat for students. While in some schools the Socratic method and experiential science learning may be hailed as teaching methods that should be adopted, in other schools teachers have been assailed for attempting such "non-standard teaching methods."

4. Parent Involvement

- Teachers and administrators often make the mistake of thinking that parents are not interested in their children's education because the parents do not participate in school activities. However, sometimes parents want to participate but they have difficulty communicating in English or have job responsibilities that limit their involvement. Also, sometimes schools inadvertently make parents feel unwelcome. In some cases, teachers may see parents not as allies but as impediments to children's academic progress.

Remedies and Reforms

1. Institutional Needs & Resources

- A critical factor with respect to the quality of teaching is the amount of time the teacher has to prepare for the next day: The number of students and classes the teachers is responsible for is inversely related to the amount of time available to plan creative lessons, develop materials, attend to individual students' needs, and so on.
- School staff need to be allotted time for getting together to compare notes on students so that their efforts reinforce each other. They need time together and individually to analyze problems with the school and to assess their own teaching methods and styles.
- Districts can use retired teachers or principals as mentors to help teachers help themselves to improve their classroom instruction and style.
- One method of improving teachers' access to information on helping at-risk youth is that of developing a resource person at the district level who can act as an informational clearinghouse. Teachers and others are encouraged to provide input about problems and the solutions that have worked, adding to the resource person's knowledge base, and, in turn, to contact the resource person for assistance when necessary.
- Individuals must be made aware of the importance and concrete usefulness of understanding more about different cultures—both about one's own culture background and those of others.
- In intelligence assessments, the talents and skills of at-risk children are sometimes not recognized because schools tend to place great weight on standardized test scores. Language barriers, cultural differences, and other factors may bias these assessments. Teachers need to be aware of other ways of assessing students' skill levels, such as paying attention to the quality of the questions students ask, students' problem-solving abilities as demonstrated in everyday activities, and so on.

- Children are not only at-risk of not learning but, even worse, of not being taught. We should see schools as belonging to the students, and the schools should be oriented to students' needs. Student opinions regarding the effectiveness of programs targeted at them should be sought more often. Students should become more involved in the learning process, in part through teaching and helping each other; if we are attempting to build cultural diversity into the curriculum, how better to do it than to make use of the very representatives of such diversity?
- Schools should use their older students and nearby high school and college students as role models and peer advisors. Such students could also act as aids to teachers trying to incorporate cultural diversity. Many schools have made use of adults in the community as bilingual aids; programs like these should certainly be encouraged.
- Everyone should be reminded to treat children in decent, courteous ways. This includes encouraging each other to speak up regarding colleagues who are not doing this: Faculty members need to decide to allow each other to exchange constructive criticism privately (or semi-privately) on matters that directly affect the quality of students' school experiences.
- Have the principal serve as a role model for other staff. Part of a principal's job should include home visits, pre-enrollment talks with students and their families, and, in various ways, helping to facilitate student and parent bonding with the school.

2. Research

- Schools, districts, and boards need researchers to provide them with concrete information that they can adapt easily and apply to problems and situations in their schools. Examples include guidebooks and reviews of general information and current literature.
- Researchers and administrators need to pay more attention to teachers—using teachers as researchers can help both the applicability of academic research and the quality of instruction as teachers take time themselves for reflection and assessment.
- Also, a gap of understanding seems to exist between educational researchers and practitioners. Programs developed by researchers may be perceived solely as "academic exercises" or fads. On the other hand, a "single issue mentality" might lead schools to seek specific remedies to specific problems rather than being willing to address the more general and fundamental needs of reform which research tends to address.

- Lastly, there is a need for cost-benefit studies so that adequate data for school decision-making will be available. Education needs to be looked at as an investment in the future of our society.

3. Staff Development

- Treat colleagues the way we want them to treat students. Compliment each other on good practices, as well as noting possible areas for improvement.
- Role-play situations in faculty meetings. Role playing is a useful way of devising alternative ways to respond to potentially problematic situations, and it allows teachers to be better able to incorporate those responses more automatically when responding to situations.
- Help teachers develop techniques to avoid the behaviors that trigger negative student responses. For example, out-loud reprimands are embarrassing to students; teachers can be taught other techniques, such as talking to students privately, to convey the message that certain behavior is not acceptable. Teachers can also be encouraged to monitor the number of positive and negative messages they give to students, as a mechanism for improving their ratio of positive to negative comments/actions.
- Traditional textbook-based curricula has persuaded many teachers and administrators that school is a conglomeration of material to be covered rather than a process through which people learn to learn. Work with teachers to help them see all students as equal and able; a teacher's role should be to work with a student until he or she "gets it."
- Ensure that teachers teach thinking and decision-making skills and that they know how to assess students' progress in terms of them. Lecturing, using hands-on instructional methods, and testing students on facts have useful roles, but they are not as central to the needs of students to become lifetime learners.
- Develop support systems for teachers. They should not be individually blamed for students' problems that are related to the conditions of society. On the other hand, assess teachers based on the progress students make (this is not identical with the student's ranking on a curve relative to other students).
- Further teachers' ability to handle cultural diversity through fostering opportunities for in-service training on ways of building on cultural diversity and encouraging student engagement. There may be natural limits on one person's ability to understand the diverse cultural backgrounds of students, but it is not necessary to try to become an expert in the language and customs of various groups. The important thing is that teachers should respect different cultures and create a classroom environment in which students and teachers feel comfortable sharing information

about their cultures. Schools need to foster long-term, systematic professional development that includes focusing on how culture impacts development and the way kids learn, as well as on information relating to traditions of different cultures.

4. Curricula

- Help students to recognize differences and commonalties between different groups of people through different subject materials (e.g., social studies, biology, history, music).
- Use students as resources; learn know how to tap the kids' experiences. Although it is a point often forgotten, teachers can't know it all and should empower students.
- Engage students in learning: In the end, no matter what adults' perceptions of a student may be, the point of students being at school is to learn. Cooperative learning and peer tutoring can help students to become engaged with each other and with the material.
- Validate students' experiences; demonstrate your appreciation for the integrity of their cultures and experiences. Show them that you believe they have a side of the story. Writing programs—where students write about themselves, share their work in pairs, and each student reports back to the other about it—are one way to help validate students' experiences. Listening and sharing are important.
- Occasionally build lessons on the experiences of students' families—lessons where their family members (or close friends in cases where the child may lack family members who provide a nurturing environment and a sense of continuity) are the ones that provide the information, such as in drawing family trees, retelling oral histories, and writing a novelette based on a family member's youth.
- What is necessary is to meet diversity with diversity; that is, several good models of effective teaching strategies are needed. Learning to think should include learning to analyze subjects from a multitude of perspectives—using this approach as a model or goal of schooling would lessen the severity of current arguments over "Who's history is it?"
- Help students to gain the social skills they need: Skills such as social problem-solving skills, developing positively assertive behavior, the ability to accept criticism, and the ability to make difficult decisions relating to relationships and sexual intercourse typically need to be reviewed, reinforced, and expanded upon over time.
- Instead of just preaching at kids to stay in school and improve their grades, there should be support systems in place to help them.

- We all need to teach children and each other to use our own experiences (and those of others with whom we can more easily identify) to understand better the experiences of others who may seem very different from ourselves. We all need to "learn to learn"—to be able to determine what information and training we lack and to reassess those needs as our communities change.
- Learning should be built in part upon what is relevant to the community. Common examples of this type of a focus include the local and state history classes that most students get in elementary school. This idea can be further extended in order to help children learn through learning about places and associations close to them.

5. Parents and Other Community Members

- Make positive contacts with parents; it is important to contact them regarding *good* things about their children. Too often the only contacts teachers initiate with parents are to report behavioral problems. In many cases it will be helpful to teach parents the problem-solving skills taught their children.
- If schools are to respond adequately to cultural diversity, they can no longer isolate themselves from their communities. Instead, schools must encourage members of the various cultural groups found in their communities to become more involved in school activities.
- It might be possible to repackage educational reform initiatives as urban development efforts. If the school were seen as serving not only school-age children but the entire community, funding for it might be gathered from sources other than those that typically fund educational programs. Partnerships may also be possible with local businesses interested in the quality of the next generation of employees.

Session III:
Barriers and Incentives to Implementing Reforms
Keynote Address by Waldemar Rojas and
Presentations by G. Alfred Hess and Michelle Fine

Keynote Address by Dr. Waldemar Rojas (Excerpts)

...Urban education is undergoing tremendous and awful attacks. What we have done in terms of providing quality educational services for youngsters of poverty, who are very often the youngsters who are at risk, has merited all the criticisms which we receive. [...Yet] while there are lots of discussions about how we don't have the finances to improve, there also has been a tremendous improvement in the quality of what we do. We have a much better understanding of what the needs are.

Firstly, the youngsters that we define "at risk" may need to be further redefined, because they are no longer just at risk with regard to urban education. They are, in fact, in danger. And, the responses that we see, the kinds of wildness, the lack of respect for life..[tell us that this] is an issue on which we need to refocus, rethink, and come up with effective strategies...We need to think about what it is that has become schools' responsibility and refocus those schools. We need to refocus on what it is that the child needs, what it is that we provide...[The] community structures...haven't been there for a long time in urban education. And, these kinds of issues have also struck in smaller towns...There was a point in time when we could be satisfied with teaching children. Our mission is vastly different now. Essentially...we raise children. Better than 50% of households are single-parent, but 10% of kids [live with neither] of their natural parents. And so, the kinds of support that need to be there we must expand.

In the late '70s and the early '80s, we had lots of good programs targeted for particular youngsters. A youngster was at risk because she was pregnant, so we came up with all the prenatal care programs—but why did she get pregnant? We ought to talk about that. Where was the sex education program in our school system earlier on?...

We need to face the children more holistically, and we need to come up with strategies that look not only at their socialization, their cognitive development, and their emotional well-being, but also look at all the financial issues and all the support issues. How we do that in a dwindling economy *is* difficult; but, it is more difficult if we don't do it...

...[There] are lots of interagency things that we *must* do if we are going to combat the conditions which put youngsters at risk....to help with services that poor kids [don't] get anywhere else...[We] need to provide the basic services that youngsters are eligible for, that the Federal Government would pay for, that wouldn't impact the general fund or the

tax funding component, that would increase the utilization of services that the city already has. We need to do these things. We need to refocus on the child.

...We have more kids in jail; the rate has increased this year another 4%. Despite the AIDS epidemic, teen pregnancy is up 6%. In New York City alone, there were 1,700 kids who tested HIV positive. The "no parent" issue of 10%. If you were poor in 1973, we brought you a new definition of poverty in 1992. The median income of families has declined; families of three had more money then than now. Our kids are exposed to drugs that are substantially more dangerous...The dropout rates have been arrested in some areas, but they certainly have not been arrested in the African-American and in the Latino communities...[We need to focus] on which youngsters *dropped out* and which ones we *pushed out.*

[There are youngsters] in programs that do push them out—I can give you an example: I ran a school for 3,300 kids, primarily Latino. Two hundred kids got a diploma each year...We offered the youngsters bilingual services...[We] taught them English...[but it] didn't count towards graduation...There was a great focus on taking the youngster's native language away and teaching him what we wanted to teach. I'm sorry—you can't do that: You cannot expect a youngster to come, sit, and listen to what you tell him and not accept him in some way.

...There *are* still some service economy jobs...through which [youngsters] can at least earn some income...[and] they can be as smart or smarter, come 4:00...and you have an empty building that is being utilized...[There are] many people who need to work during the course of that day who would gladly give a couple of hours to serve as role models, to tutor and work with kids...if it could be worked around their work schedule...[The youngsters] need to see success. And individual adults need to have that opportunity to do things like this.

For youngsters at risk, wherever there is a support system, we need to capitalize on it. We need to get parents, the youngsters, and us in this refocused school to understand our responsibilities, because it isn't just one of us that is going to make the students succeed. And, we need to build partnerships not only with agencies, but with the people who love the children the most: their parents...What we do is only dependent on what we *want* to do. I have not met a youngster that is *uneducable*; I have met youngsters who *have not been educated.*

We need to continue to set high expectations, and to make use of those techniques for more effective schools that are time tested: of setting high expectations, of focusing on instruction, of assessing what we do, of setting up a safe climate, of showing leadership. Leadership is important regardless of whether it is shared decision-making and school-based planning or whether it is dictatorial. Leadership involves caring about what happens in that school...

In this business, people tend to blame each other a lot. "Education is not working, so the schools are at fault." The schools are doing what they thought they were focused to do. It is clear that we have more to do. *It's all of our faults*. And we need to go back and remind parents and youngsters of their responsibility and remind the community at large of its responsibility...

The incentives are many. The single most important one is the quality of your life and that of your children. If education doesn't work, we will all be unhappy. The crime rate will continue to increase...Imagine if we could take all of the capital expenditures and instead use that money for instruction! We need to refocus on prevention, and we need to refocus on what it is that makes society work and what makes this country particularly terrific. It is the opportunity for success. Our youngsters need to have that opportunity....

Dr. G. Alfred Hess on the Chicago School Reform Act

Most programs focus on at-risk kids, as though they were at one extreme end of a continuum. However, in urban areas, the at-risk kids form the majority of the students. Eighty percent of kids in elementary schools in Chicago qualify for a free lunch. Ninety-six schools have 100% low income students. One hundred and twelve schools have 90-99% low income students. Two-thirds of all kids in Chicago go to schools that have at least 80% low income kids; only 17% go to schools with less than 30% low income kids. One third of all high schools have more students drop out than graduate. There are great discrepancies between funding and test scores across schools, and in the past those schools with the poorest kids got the least funding. The structure of today's schools prevents teachers from helping students.

The Chicago School Reform Act was created by outsiders to try to change this situation: It has the goal of bringing all Chicago's kids up to the national average on indices of educational achievement. It is allocating funds more fairly and cutting excessive administration costs—this has combined to give the average elementary school $340,000 in additional funds. The Act established school-based management, making use of councils composed of the principal and of representative teachers, students, parents, and community members. Council meetings have been marked by high attendance and appropriate agendas. The councils decide issues such as school improvement plans, spending, and principal selection. Thirty-eight percent of schools have different principals than before. In response to this, principals are beginning to restructure their jobs to be able to work effectively as part of a council over the long-run. Teachers, who were largely left out of the original process, have been instrumental in creating school improvement plans. However, 5 out of 8 teachers said they had not changed their instructional methods and did not think they would be required to under reform.

A great deal of school-level discretionary funding was freed up from other sources—$340,000 for the average elementary school and $478,000 for the average high school, with seven schools receiving more than $1,000,000. These are funds designated to help at-risk youth, and they now go to schools based on their percentage of low income students. It makes one wonder whether the problem is a lack of money or rather the poor allocation of money currently available to school districts. Another factor that has contributed to helping these students is that national school reform gurus have now been allowed access to Chicago and have brought special programs and assistance to bear directly on over 150 schools.

However, change has been slow in many schools, especially in the area of instruction. Some have changed, though—one school within one year accomplished the following: (1) it brought in the Illinois Writing Program and changed the curricula so that every element involves writing; (2) it changed to experimental methods in science teaching; (3) it began using the Socratic seminar method in social studies courses; and (4) it changed to a literature-based reading program. But, teachers like these need a *lot* of support to completely restructure their curriculum and to emotionally cope with the changes.

Chicago has tried to fix the system rather than "fixing" the kids. Schools typically reward middle-class and assembly-line type behaviors, not the behaviors that work well for these kids in other areas of their lives, and not those behaviors they will need to cope well with the future. We believe changing the schools in Chicago to be more important than changing these otherwise well-adapted behaviors.

Dr. Michelle Fine on the Philadelphia Schools Collaborative

The Philadelphia Schools Collaborative, funded by Pew Charitable Trust has the aim of transforming the 22 comprehensive high schools and the central district. Comprehensive high schools contain the secondary students who get left out of alternative and magnet schools—the average one has 2,500 to 3,000 kids—half of whom are in the 9th grade...until they're not. When the Collaborative began, about 40% of 9th graders eventually made it to 10th grade, and the hemorrhaging between 8th and 9th went largely unrecorded. Only about 30-40% of the typical urban 9th grade cohort graduates. The Philadelphia Schools Collaborative is attempting to transform the comprehensive schools for all students—not to create more "alternative" schools from which most would still be excluded.

Given the current state of urban education, many teachers initially had serious difficulties imagining how these schools could be. Staff had worked so long in some of these schools that their sense of possibilities had been damaged by failure. Many had come to believe that failure is inevitable. Through its work, the Collaborative has learned several things about beginning reform:

- People have deeply entrenched notions about tracking (concepts that *people change*, or that *school is a developmental process*, are radical in many schools)
- The degree of communitarian damage is great ("Communitarian damage" is damage sustained by people because of their participation in an organization)
- Silencing in public schools seems to hold institutions together (people are not sure that there is a good way out of the hard conversations, so they are nervous about having them)
- Transforming urban schools *is* imminently possible—quite within our reach

Five elements of systemic reform have been generated by the Philadelphia experience. First, *changes are necessary in governance so that it will reinforce community* and through this get aid to those who need it. Transforming a hierarchy into a democracy is tricky at times; many people have trouble imaging that consensus is possible. Second, *large comprehensive schools need to be transformed into charter schools.* Charter schools are subdivisions of an original school into smaller schools, are designed and organized by teachers, and possess decision-making power and resources. Charters have two to four hundred heterogeneously-grouped students and 15 or so teachers who work solely with these students. These changes are leading to higher attendance rates, pass rates, promotion levels, and parent involvement. The charters also have to be designed so that they enable students to continue onto college. The charter becomes the center of intellectual and emotional life for the students within it. Charters must have intellectual coherence; some charters focus on areas such as multiculturalism, community service, or writing. Teachers are encouraged to get to know students as individuals, to get help for students, and to provide students with the experience of bonding directly with adults.

Third, *charters need to work to improve staffs' relationships with parents and the community.* It is necessary to both organize parents separately and to help parents and teachers to interact with each other. Fourth, *assessment needs to be transformed so it is performance-based and culturally rich.* Fifth, *schools need to do a better job of thinking through the transitions into and out of high school.*

These reforms have been designed to be teacher-driven, though it was very hard at first for some teachers to imagine how schools could be, or, that heterogeneity and multiculturalism could enrich their classrooms. These changes have helped to get people to talk about the taboo topics in school. Children have often been the ones who have been more able to get the conversation going and keep it going. The Collaborative has sought to engage staff, parents, and students in conversations that were previously taboo or silenced. Because many personal issues (e.g., homelessness, poverty, racism) are actually political issues as well, they can profitably be included in the curricula.

To invent and sustain urban schools as intellectual communities, we need a system that honors the charter structure, for example, by not bouncing teachers from school to school.

Schools need stability. Charters need to be the site of decision making and resource allocation; appropriate accountability measures can then be developed and applied at the charter level.

As we have reinvented high schools, we need to reinvent central districts. It is neither too expensive nor too late to make a difference, even at the high school where everyone says, "all students' performances are predictable by the third grade." Public education can kill the interest students have for school by the time they are fourteen, but we now have evidence that *we can also bring students' interest in school back*—even for those we have placed "at risk."

Evaluation of the Conference by Participants

Approximately 50 of the 182 people who attended the conference responded to the Conference evaluation sheets that were included in the registration packets. Not all respondents responded to each question. We summarize these responses in the following discussion. Eighty-four percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the conference was well organized. Thirty percent agreed or strongly agreed that the conference objectives were clear from the start, with 50% disagreeing and 8% strongly disagreeing. Eighty-one percent agreed or strongly agreed that the panel presentations were clear and understandable. Ninety percent thought that the small-group sessions stimulated discussion. Eighty-seven percent believed that the keynote speaker added an important perspective. Sixty-nine percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "The conference really contributed to my understanding of at-risk issues."

Participants were also asked in what ways they would like to continue to participate in the project. Twenty-seven said they would like to review a paper on how students become at risk of failure. Twenty-nine said they would like to review a paper on programs designed to help at-risk students. Twenty-one offered to review the summary of conference proceedings. Eight would like to nominate a project for study by this evaluation. Sixteen would like to give advice regarding the development of teacher materials based on the findings from this project, and 27 said they would like to review materials developed by the project for use by teachers. Fourteen offered to help organize another conference like this one.

Suggestions to improve the organization of the conference:

- Pre-conference readings to clarify conference objectives and create agendas for small working groups.
- Small group discussions tended to be monopolized by a few people; facilitators might try to orchestrate discussion more evenly.
- Keeping the speakers within their time limits—One participant wrote, "No one is a good enough speaker to listen to for more than a half hour."

Other topics that participants would like to have seen covered:

- Advocacy and school reform—lobbying at local, state and federal levels and community and parent organizing.
- What to do about dysfunctional families and such problems as AIDS, drugs, child abuse, and parents who themselves have a low level of education.

- More information about actual studies going on in schools—the presentations by Rojas, Hess and Fine, for example, were generally considered to be most informative.
- Auxiliary health services—they seem to be an integral part of the solution but were not covered by presenters.
- Teachers' perspectives on at-risk students and attitude change.
- Restructuring teacher education programs and colleges of education.
- Development of multicultural materials.
- More recognition of the problems faced by girls in school.

Appendix A:
Keynote Address

Keynote Address by Dr. Waldemar Rojas, Superintendent Designate of the San Francisco Unified School District*

Ladies and gentlemen, today you're at risk—the risk that my voice doesn't leave after a couple of speeches earlier this morning. It is really an honor and a privilege for me to be here tonight and to welcome you to my home town, San Francisco.

When I first arrived here, in February and March, it rained terribly. I had heard many stories about the drought; we thought at first that I had applied to the superintendency in Seattle. Fortunately, on a wonderful day like today, we see that San Francisco is a sunny, bright place. But, for all the weather and for all the gloominess and cloudiness, there are always smiles of brightness and smiles of joy. This is a very wonderful place, a very diverse place, and a very important place in terms of the pertinency of the topic—youngsters at risk, youngsters who drop out—and what kinds of strategies we have with regard to this problem.

Now, certainly, urban education is undergoing tremendous and awful attacks. What we have done in terms of providing quality educational services for youngsters of poverty, who are very often the youngsters who are at risk, has merited all the criticisms which we receive. We have really gotten a lot better at responding to the criticisms. And, while there are lots of discussions about recessions, and while there are lots of discussions about how we don't have the finances to improve, there also has been a tremendous improvement in the quality of what we do. We have a much better understanding of what the needs are.

Firstly, the youngsters that we define "at risk" may need to be further redefined, because they are no longer just at risk with regard to urban education. They are, in fact, in danger. And, the responses that we see, the kinds of wildness, the lack of respect for life, the lack of respect for interactions, these aren't simply issues that we need to have discussions about. This is an issue on which we need to refocus, rethink, and come up with effective strategies that look at the youngster, not simply from the standpoint of what has defined him or her as "at risk." We often talk about all of those negative variables—I won't focus on those very long because the literature is replete with them. We need to refocus what we do and how we do it, and we need to continue to think of what has worked, why it has worked, and what are the causal factors that have brought that youngster to that condition. And, we keep coming back to the same point—that of self-esteem: how well youngsters think about themselves, and how well we tell them what we think of them. We do that in many different ways in the school system. We judge them. We judge them on what they have learned. We have not judged them on how well we have taught them, but on what they have learned, and we tell them they're failures. We do that on a fairly regular basis;

* Transcription of the presentation by Dr. Rojas

we share it not only with them, but with their parents, and we hammer away at that self-esteem.

In New York City, about which I have a lot more information on how things are done, there are some great successes, and there are also some places about which we ought to be pretty ashamed of and cry about. We place lots of youngsters who have not succeeded in the same building with lots of adults who have not succeeded in that building and then expect them all to succeed. We do have lots of penal institutions that follow that model. That is not what schools are supposed to do. We need to come up with strategies that take successes and reinforce those successes in very many small ways.

There are 3,000 youngsters in some institutions, and we don't even call their names to take attendance—we just give them a number and let them clock in and clock out. It *is* very efficient, but it is *very impersonal.* We don't know their names. We sit them in a home room for ten minutes, and then we walk them around to seven different adults. Hopefully, those seven adults had a good evening, because facing thirty-two youngsters is a very challenging event. The thirty-two youngsters may not have had such a good evening. They may have come through some very traumatic situations in just getting to school, in just facing that morning—and we are going to address them only with regard to their academic achievement.

We need to think about what it is that has become schools' responsibility and refocus those schools. We need to refocus on what it is that the child needs, what it is that we provide, and what we are not providing, because—while there was a point in time in our history when we were an agrarian society, and a Norman Rockwell family and all the community structures were there—they haven't been there for a long time in urban education. And, these kinds of issues have also struck in smaller towns such that the number of youngsters at risk everywhere continues to increase.

We need to refocus what the school does. There was a point in time when we could be satisfied with teaching children. Our mission is vastly different now. Essentially, we don't just teach children, we raise children. In this nation, 10% of all children live with not a *single* parent—they don't live with *any* parent. Better than 50% of households are single-parent, but 10% of kids live with neither of their natural parents. And so, the kinds of support that need to be there we must expand.

Think about your kids in urban education: If we didn't feed them, when would they eat? And, why do we close schools in summer, when the effect is simply to say to kids, "You're going to have to struggle on your own for a couple of months as far as your daily sustenance is concerned." Because, after all, for those youngsters, it isn't as if all of a sudden in July and August the recession has ended for them. As a matter of fact, they have never been in a recession; they have always been in a state of depression. A recession is when I can pay the rent a couple of months late and stay. *That* is a recession

for very many of our urban youth at risk. And, a recession is very, very difficult for us to deal with—imagine what it is like for those who have never had anything. They can't plan and budget and deal with those kinds of items; they can only suffer the daily pangs.

So, from the feeding process to the socialization process, to health, nutrition—all of those factors—if you want to help the youngster exist, you've got to help the whole youngster. You've got to figure out what are the causal factors that has brought that youngster into the position of not achieving with his or her peers, and you must address all of those issues.

In the late '70s and the early '80s, we had lots of good programs targeted for particular youngsters. A youngster was at risk because she was pregnant, so we came up with all the prenatal care programs—but why did she get pregnant? We ought to talk about that. Where was the sex education program in our school system earlier on? And, while we were serving this one youngster, what happened to the other thousands of youngsters? Were we certain that those factors weren't there with them? We had targeted job employment activities, and these had important effects for a period of time: If a youngster was able to be employed, to build some of his or her self-esteem. Well, but what happens after the job ends? What happens after the tax credits end? We still have the same people. We still have the same problem.

We need to face the children more holistically, and we need to come up with strategies that look not only at their socialization, their cognitive development, and their emotional well-being, but also look at all the financial issues and all the support issues. How we do that in a dwindling economy *is* difficult; but, it is more difficult if we don't do it. And if we don't do it, you can come into one of our high schools—after you've been frisked, and gone through all the systems to be sure that you don't have a weapon—That's what this society will come down to.

This society has done great things with walking away from its children. People ask me, "Why do you go to a state which used to be ranked number 5 in educating its children, based on per capita expenditure and which is now ranked 33?" It is very difficult for me to justify why even New York City spends more money on its children than cities in California. It is a very difficult problem. These kinds of issues need to be addressed, especially as the complexity of our children's needs is increasing. Our schools need to refocus moralistically, and this is very difficult because we are a business that is enormously conservative. We don't change quickly, and we don't change easily. And, in some places, we don't change at all, much less learn to fly.

It is very difficult to profess to want to do that. But, there are lots of interagency things that we *must* do if we are going to combat the conditions which put youngsters at risk. When I went to school in the south Bronx—the guy was a butcher—but they *had* a dentist. (*Terrible*, as I recall. It was *very* painful. He had all of the oldest techniques that

could have been invented. Chisel and hammer would have probably moved him up in scientific methodology.) But, *he was there.* Somebody was *there* to help with services that poor kids couldn't get anywhere else.

Now we have some districts that are growing and that have space and capital problems, but we have others that have lots of space. Cities go and build health clinics, and then they get all disgusted and frustrated because they don't get high utilization of the clinics. Well, we have kids who are all Medicaid-eligible who need service. Did you ever see an eight-year walk into a health clinic by himself? Often there is nobody to take him to a clinic. So, sometimes the health clinics and those kinds of services need to come to the schools where we have the kids. And, we need to perform some of the coordination activities for those youngsters. That doesn't cost anything more than it costs now. When I was in schools, my school secretary told *me* what to do. I'm sure that she could work out how to schedule some of these other activities while I'm off doing observations, talking to kids, or spending most of my time in the lunchroom trying to do crisis prevention.

We need to do more, and the capacity to do more is there if we are willing to refocus what we do. We need to tie in agency services. When the youngster is found to be in severe need, yes, *then* the health clinic will be appropriate. But *we* need to provide the basic services that youngsters are eligible for, that the Federal Government would pay for, that wouldn't impact the general fund or the tax funding component, that would increase the utilization of services that the city already has. We need to do these things. We need to refocus on the child.

There are many other areas, some of which I am going to mention very, very briefly: We have more kids in jail; the rate has increased this year another 4%. Despite the AIDS epidemic, teen pregnancy is up 6%. In New York City alone, there were 1,700 kids who tested HIV positive. The "no parent" issue of 10%. If you were poor in 1973, we brought you a new definition of poverty in 1992. The median income of families has declined; families of three had more money then than now. Our kids are exposed to drugs that are substantially more dangerous. They know more about them; they know more about them than *I* did when *I* was in high school—and I thought I was in a pretty negatively progressive high school, if you understand what I mean—We knew all of the things you shouldn't do and how to do them. The dropout rates have been arrested in some areas, but they certainly have not been arrested in the African-American and in the Latino communities. There are youngsters who have or who are about to dropout—I don't know if they have really *dropped out.* I hope that as we talk about our at-risk and dropout programs that we start focusing on which youngsters *dropped out* and which ones we *pushed out.*

There are some youngsters who really are in programs that do push them out—I can give you an example: I ran a school for 3,300 kids, primarily Latino. Two hundred kids got a

diploma each year. I called our first faculty meeting. They said, "You can't do that. You can't do this; you can't do that." I said, Why? As a matter of fact, if none of us came to work, we would probably still have two hundred kids graduating. We offered the youngsters bilingual services. We stacked them in ESL classes and we taught them English, and we taught them English, and we taught them English. And they all sat there, because these youngsters from the Dominican Republic were really grasping at this opportunity to go to school. The public education system in the Dominican Republic—if you have any idea of it, clear it out of your mind. They came, they sat, they listened. And they even got a credit—but the credit didn't count towards graduation. It just *counted*, because they passed the course but it wasn't considered to be an acceptable course as far as content area. Our bilingual programs in some aspects had not tied into specified content areas. There was a great focus on taking the youngster's native language away and teaching him what we wanted to teach. I'm sorry—you can't do that: You cannot expect a youngster to come, sit, and listen to what you tell him and not accept him in some way. A youngster coming to that school at age fourteen (having just come to the United States) and getting no credits. Now we told him we have a system where you need to get 42 credits, and, at the end of three years, we gave him some credits—the health credits, the Phys. Ed. credits, and a couple of other credits here and there. And, he says, "Well, gees, I've got ten credits; I've been here 2 years; thank you very much. I'll wait to take the GED." That youngster didn't *drop out*. That youngster made a good, calculated decision that if he stayed in the school system, sometime after he had his second or third kid, he'd be getting a diploma.

These are little things on which we need to focus, with regard to what is important to us as a school system, versus what is important to our clients, the children. We need to focus on whether those programs could be more assertive. We have many youngsters who are wonderful youngsters, but those youngsters have families—some of them are 17-, 18-years-old and they have kids. Kids having kids is not so unusual today. We needed to look at our high schools and at how we taught these kids. We have acted as though we thought, "Gees, our kids must only be able to learn from 8:30 to 3:00." Really?

We had evening high schools way back in the Johnson Great Society era. Lots of folks went through them and got educated. Lots of these people went to work during the day. There *are* still some service economy jobs that nobody wants to do that youngsters will do, and through which they can at least earn some income (that's a primary piece of self-esteem). And, they can be as smart or smarter, come 4:00 to 8:00 to 9:00. It is even better if they're in the school at that time of the day. And again, does it cost more money? No, the ADA would follow. You would still get all of the resources for that kid, and not only that, if you are in a good climate, evening schools have cost benefits, because you don't have to pay the additional fringe benefits: you hire the same teachers that you hired during the day. You hire the master teachers to work with the youngsters at night. All of

the health, medical, and retirement benefits are already paid for. School administrators, you are already saving 30%. And you could also identify topnotch educators who could really focus on and function well with the youngsters. The youngsters work, and the youngsters get an opportunity to go through with an educational program; and, you have an empty building that is being utilized. And imagine if you even brought into that empty building some youngsters who were, say, failing calculus, and you didn't have to wait for them to fail. As long as you have your building open, you could provide services that would let youngsters use the physics lab. What school administrator ever has enough physics and science and chemistry labs? None. There isn't an institution that has been built well enough, unless it was built in the last ten years. So, here is a way of utilizing some other resources. Again, the financial incentive is there for the youngster.

And then, we talk about self-esteem. I keep coming back to that topic. I haven't met too many African-American and Latino philanthropists. It is just probably a factor of they're not being on Long Island or having enough of an opportunity to make millions of dollars. However, what I do know is that there are probably many people who need to work during the course of that day who would gladly give a couple of hours to serve as role models, to tutor and work with kids and be school volunteers, if it could be worked around their work schedule. Maybe on the way home, at 7:00 p.m., some attorney could stop by. Some other person in another industry could also stop by to work with the youngsters and to provide the kinds of positive role models that they need. They need to see success. And individual adults need to have that opportunity to do things like this. How we refocus and rethink our schools can provide us with some of these opportunities.

In the end, we need to think about how children learn. We still are very much involved in a lecture process. If it were not so late, and the sun weren't shining, and there weren't so many other wonderful activities to do—if your concentration were 100%, I expect that you would probably hear and retain about 25% of what I said, because the lecture process is just not one of the most effective instruction strategies. I could have been better prepared and had this material given to you written up. I could have had a little video or a little skit, had something so that you could see it, because people retain much more of what they see and what they touch as well as hear.

We need to refocus on how we teach youngsters who have not succeeded in the school system and on what strategies we have employed with them. It isn't always just class size. It is the ability to interact with an adult on what is being not only taught, but on what is being learned, what is being comprehensively absorbed, so that misunderstandings or understandings can be expressed. We know this because this works wonderfully in our preschool programs. It works wonderfully in our kindergarten and early childhood programs. Our kids (including our minority kids, who might otherwise be at risk), if they manage to get into a school at age three, tend to come out of these programs onto the proper grade level for their age; this occurs substantially more for those who participated

in these programs. And, then we stopped using that strategy. Then we go into a textbook strategy. Or, we go into a computer strategy. But, we oftentimes don't focus enough on children predicting, children explaining what they learned, and children interacting with one another.

Let me refer you to the February issue of the magazine **Scientific American**. It talks about why some youngsters succeed, which is really what we need to focus on, as opposed to why some youngsters fail. Asian-American students come into this nation no wealthier than anybody else and certainly with as complicated a language as there is, and yet they succeed at a wonderful rate in comparison to other minority students. And, there is a rationale for it. Firstly, the family structure stays more intact. There is somebody there. Siblings teach one another. There is still something called a family dinner. It happens, and people exchange ideas and thoughts, and, when the plates are cleaned off the table, homework is expected to be done at that table. There is time on task and reinforcement of activities. Youngsters get to ask questions in a pecking order where the oldest teaches right on down, and the next one teaches right on down. They spend time on task, and the adult is there supervising that interchange and helping where he or she can, reminding them that this great American dream that education is your right is for very many immigrants a privilege. They understand the difference between a privilege and a right, and they want to absorb the education. They want to absolutely capitalize on this opportunity. Education is an opportunity.

There is more time on task: The average adolescent student in high school level is doing three hours of homework a night. Stop by one of our schools and see how many youngsters are coming in with textbooks. If you have a textbook, maybe you used it. But, if you are walking in stylish as can be with arms loose as can be, you probably weren't doing a lot of studying the night before, unless, of course, the thing strapped on your back is your laptop. It probably isn't. We don't spend enough time talking to our students about their *own* responsibilities—several hours a night at the intermediate level and an hour and a half of grueling punishment even at the elementary and youngest level.

For youngsters at risk, wherever there is a support system, we need to capitalize on it. We need to get parents, the youngsters, and us in this refocused school to understand our responsibilities, because it isn't just one of us that is going to make the students succeed. And, we need to build partnerships not only with agencies, but with the people who love the children the most: their parents. I have two daughters. Their teachers, their principals, they love them. They tell me that all the time when I see them. (And I *don't* supervise them.) They tell me they love them, and I believe they do. I *also* believe that no matter how much they love them, I love my children more. I also happen to know my children better. I try on occasion to give some suggestions on how they might learn better.

That is one of the wonderful advantages I have had being in the field of special education (I have been able to spend ten years in general education and ten years in special education)—to see youngsters with such energy. "They're not going to learn; They're not going to walk; They're not going to talk." Well, they did. They did become functioning human beings once the expectation of the school was not simply to love them and be compassionate, and hug them and hold them because they were physically disabled and mentally retarded. To *teach* them, to teach them how to feed themselves, how to clothe themselves, how to ambulate with supports—youngsters who with head pointers could learn to use some computer processes. We have seen quadriplegics who had absolutely no physical operational strength other than their mouth, who were able to talk to me in a very brilliant way, by blowing out through a tube in Morse code words that were then translated in the synthesizer on the computer and printed out on the screen. And, if I could type words onto the screen, he could read. What we do is only dependent on what we *want* to do. I have not met a youngster that is *uneducable*; I have met youngsters who *have not been educated.*

We need to continue to set high expectations, and to make use of those techniques for more effective schools that are time tested: of setting high expectations, of focusing on instruction, of assessing what we do, of setting up a safe climate, of showing leadership. Leadership is important regardless of whether it is shared decision-making and school-based planning or whether it is dictatorial. Leadership involves caring about what happens in that school. There isn't one style that works, and there isn't one school that works. There are schools that work because all of the partners make it work, and there are lots of different ways to do that. And, there are lots of different youngsters that can be very well educated in one school, and who simply will not work in another school. We need to think about why we send this kid to that school. Maybe there is another environment where he or she would find their needs more carefully attended to.

We do things like moving at-risk kids because they get in trouble a lot. We move them from once place to another. On what basis? On the basis of hoping that maybe things will work out if they are moved. Sometimes we put them in another school in which they will be gobbled up immediately, but where they won't be able to gang up on you in a crisis. Maybe it's the wrong place for them. We have to consider not only their academic experience; we have to consider the reality of the streets and keep that in mind in terms of what we do in preparing our youngsters.

For this session, I was asked to talk about barriers and incentives, so I stopped and I wrote down some of the barriers and issues that I hear on a regular basis as to why schools aren't effective. The first one is: "we don't have enough dollars." But, we do know that if you do not do some prevention and intervention early on, you'll never have enough dollars. Rehabilitation and remediation are extremely expensive and not very cost-effective, and in the end they are just playing catch-up and doing good social work. We

need to focus on the fact that there are not enough dollars and to come up with quality, tested programs. We need to find out whether the programs worked, under which circumstances they worked, and how they worked, and we need to share that. We must replicate those that work, and continue to assess their effectiveness on a regular basis. Because dollars are scarce, we need to spend them better.

The second issue involves the phrase: "I wasn't trained to do that."—the standard bureaucratic turf issue. "I went into education to teach." Well, if you did, there are still some Scarsdales and Great Necks left. (I envy them.) You went into education because you cared about people, and education *is* one of the great businesses for child advocacy and for civil rights. And that is what makes this business so exciting. If you want to do it, you have to do it forgetting the turf and working much more cooperatively with parents and agencies. So if you went into it to teach, maybe a few universities are still around.

Complacency. "We are doing well." We are. How are the kids doing? Just ask those questions on occasion. What are the outcomes for our youngsters?

School structure. "We can't do it. This is our building. This is our structure." I am going around San Francisco looking for my first middle school. I am going to carry around a little red badge and I am going to put it on that school, because so far I have found junior high schools. I haven't found middle schools. We need to think about how we restructure our schools to provide more nurturing environments, if it is a fact that youngsters change physically from ten to fifteen. Why are we sending them to so many places and confusing them right in the middle of socialization, puberty, and all of those factors? Why don't we have some form of family classes where people can do co-operative teaching and team teaching? Why? Because school structure doesn't allow us to. It doesn't cost any more. People will get to know kids better. I suppose we could even probably get some waivers if you don't have the exact license for the exact skill. It isn't as if at that level we are teaching rocket science. How many teachers here have ever been one lesson ahead of their class? Good. It isn't that it can't be done.

The methodology of instruction—we know a lot more about it now. We know a lot more about child development. We know a lot more about how children learn. The language people and the reading recovery people have really attacked the issue of how children consume information. We need to try to look at not what the State has approved in terms of textbooks, but what we have approved in terms of methodology. What I say is of little importance once the classroom teacher shuts the door. What he or she says is what is most important. If you want to address youngsters at risk, you have to be certain that behind that door is a quality instructional program in which children are predicting, in which children are doing critical thinking, and in which children are interchanging and exchanging ideas both with themselves and with the adult in the room.

The other barrier, which I have spoken about briefly, is the failure of society to care for children. We have every kind of education president, education governor, education this, education that. The bottom line is we spend less money on our kids, so, therefore, if they really cared, that is where their strategy would be. We may write up goals for the year 2000, and they are very important, *but* we *need* to have an overall plan. However, there isn't a president that can serve for more than two terms, as I understand it. (I haven't been paying attention recently, but I don't think that has changed.) We need to do something now. We need to take the ideas and develop a plan and do it *now*.

Whether the youngsters are ready to learn in the year 2000 is important, but it would be better if they were ready to learn in 1992. The only thing that prevents them from being ready is *us*. The strategies need to be more comprehensive. We speak about not having a comprehensive plan. Well, we *do* have a comprehensive plan. We just need to be certain that the plan is comprehensive not for us, but for our kids. How well are we touching all of their needs?—and it has to be their needs, not ours.

Housing. Those are issues that we as educators have to work on too. School systems are affected by housing patterns, and segregation comes back via housing patterns. Children in poverty learn to follow the role models they do because of housing patterns. We need to build on what we have, and we need to share, and we need to figure out ways of improving the situation. That's not our direct responsibility, but probably every single one of us is a registered voter who can make an impact on very many of these issues.

So how do we address children at risk? The dropouts? Very comprehensively and with lots of ideas and plans. As I go around, colleagues say, "Well, what's your idea?" I appreciate that, because we get to exchange ideas back and forth in this business. I really am thankful for AIR—they get to tell you other people's ideas. You don't have to agree with the ideas. You don't have to follow them. But, at least you have the opportunity to find out about them. This is a very, very stingy business. We keep a lot of our ideas in our pockets to ourselves. We don't market things that are working with our youngsters. We need to do that. We need to generalize. We need to validate. We need to replicate. And we need to say what's working. In some of these sessions and in your workshops, that is really where you are going to get ideas—from exchanging them with one another. Many of the groups that I have faced are saying, "Well, we are waiting for your vision." Don't. I have one, but don't wait for mine. I am assuming that in this town, and in the towns that you are from, there are thousands and thousands of people with ideas. This single NYU graduate isn't going to have all of them—he isn't going to have most of them. In the places where we've had success, it's been because other people were given an opportunity to carry out their ideas; they were empowered to do that. We need to focus on our at-risk youth along with service providers; we should let them have a lot of ideas and let them come back to us with plans, and we should hold them responsible for what they do.

In this business, people tend to blame each other a lot. "Education is not working, so the schools are at fault." The schools are doing what they thought they were focused to do. It is clear that we have more to do. *It's all of our faults*. And we need to go back and remind parents and youngsters of their responsibility and remind the community at large of its responsibility. That can have a tremendous impact.

What our best position should be is to work this legislature over, left and right, up and down, to fund the capacity to help and educate children. To have policies that say these children are important—and not just the week before November 4, in some quick sound bite, or maybe through another blue ribbon commission. The interest in this town for helping children comes from its people—what other town would vote for additional taxes in order to help its kids? This town has. That is one of the very many factors that make it such an interesting place. More people need to realize the need to make a better commitment to education.

The incentives are many. The single most important one is the quality of your life and that of your children. If education doesn't work, we will all be unhappy. The crime rate will continue to increase. The incarceration rate will continue to increase. We spend about $26,000 a year to keep somebody in jail. Can we send them to Harvard instead? That is about what it would cost. Imagine if we could take all of the capital expenditures and instead use that money for instruction! We need to refocus on prevention, and we need to refocus on what it is that makes society work and what makes this country particularly terrific. It is the opportunity for success. Our youngsters need to have that opportunity. If they don't, all of our pensions are at risk. All the social security systems are at risk. All of those things. So, if you need an incentive, be selfish.

What we would like to see is that our youngsters have one of three opportunities when they graduate from us—just keep telling them that—one is to go to college (whether it is Berkeley, Yale or Harvard), one is to go to community college, and one is to have a job. Every time we hand a diploma to a youngster, we have to be certain that we can say, "During the fifteen years that we were with you in public education from pre-K to 12 we did everything we could for you. We met all of your needs, and we tried to make certain that your capacity was reached."

Those are the incentives. It's hard work. It's not easy. But it sure as hell beats any other job I have ever had. Thank you.

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